Field

Fr.

The Revd F. R. Spragg
with Mr & Mrs Fisher's
Respects

The Aged Pastor;

A BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

OF THE

REVD. H. FIELD,

LATE

Minister of the Congregational Church,

BLANDFORD:

WITH HIS

FUNERAL SERMON;

BY

RICHARD KEYNES.

AND AN

APPENDIX,

CONTAINING THE

REV. M. BLAKE'S

ACCOUNT OF THE FIRE,

BY WHICH THE TOWN OF BLANDFORD, WAS NEARLY BURNT DOWN, IN THE YEAR 1731.

BLANDFORD;

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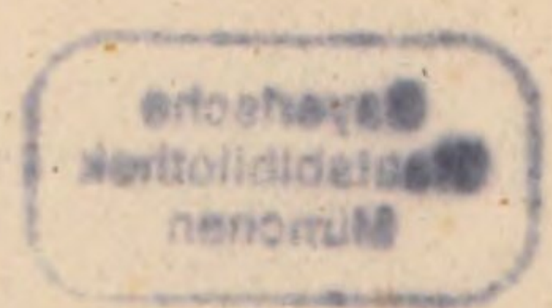

TO THE

ONLY SURVIVING DAUGHTER,

OF THAT

VENERABLE MAN,

IN WHOM,

THE WRITER FOUND, A FATHER AND A FRIEND;

THIS SLENDER PRODUCTION,

IS,

WITH AFFECTIONATE SYMPATHY, AND SINCERE ESTEEM,

RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED,

BY

RICHARD KEYNES.

Blandford Academy,
JUNE 18, 1821.

PREFACE.

WHEN our most endeared and familiar friends, are removed from us by Death, we find at first, not only a difficulty, in reconciling our minds to the loss, we have sustained, but in actually realizing it. For a time indeed, we can hardly persuade ourselves, that those with whom we constantly associated, who became in a manner identified with us, have been removed from us, for ever. We look for them, in the places they used to fill, and seem to expect their approach, at the accustomed hour of intercourse. In the habitations, they once occupied, and in the Sanctuary, where they worshipped God, something almost reaching illusion prevails, we feel for a moment, as if they were present, and our judgement performs an unwelcome office, in assuring us, that, "*they are not,*"

"*and that the place, which hath seen them, shall see them no more.*" Convinced at length, that we have "lost, what we loved"—we exchange visionary feelings, for sober recollections, and find a melancholy pleasure in dwelling upon what they were, and upon what they have been to us. A feeling of this kind relative to to the excellent subject of this Memoir; has induced the Writer, to give a hasty sketch of the life of his venerable friend. There is another and still more powerful motive, by which he is actuated, namely, the hope of contributing, in some humble degreee, to promote the valuable labours of his deceased Co-Pastor, by reminding his hearers, of his course, purpose, and manner of life. When his biography is perused, may his exhortations be called to mind, and a sense of duty be mingled, with a feeling of regret for his loss.

The Writer entertains considerable apprehension that many defects, will be found in this little work; for to say nothing of the slender abilities he possesses for its execution, his numerous avocations, deprive him of that leisure, which is favourable to such an undertaking. Could he have

commanded more time, he would have endeavoured to render what has been attempted, more deserving public notice.

Much incident cannot be expected, in the life of a man, unmarked by vicissitude, and preserving almost the same unvaried tenor, from the cradle, to the grave.

One most disadvantageous circumstance, cannot be too strongly regretted; Mr. Field absolutely prohibited the publication of any part of his Diary or Manuscripts: could the narrative have been interwoven with extracts from these, it would have become more interesting. That the publication, may be of some little benefit, to that circle, for whom it is more particularly designed, and that it may have a tendency to do good to others, is the Writers' sincere wish and prayer.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH, &c.

PARENTAGE, AND CHILDHOOD.

The Rev. Henry Field, was born in the Year 1733, at a small hamlet, about five miles, from Hitchin, in Hertfordshire. His Parents were Thomas and Mary Field: they were respectable in point of worldly circumstances, but still more distinguished, by the possession, of "*pure and undefiled religion.*" His family, presents a line of ancestry, not renowned by exploits, written in blood; nor decorated with titles of worldly honour; but eminent for that piety, which forms the best ornament of the palace, and inscribes, in golden letters, on the cottages of the poor—"How goodly, are thy tents, O Jacob; and thy tabernacles, O Israel." If the names of his ancestors, were not enrolled in the annals of fame, there are the most satisfactory reasons, for concluding, that they are written in the Lamb's book of life. Often has Mr. Field adverted to this circumstance, and spoken of it, as a privilege, for which, he could not feel, too thankful: but of which he deemed himself,

unworthy. Happily for him, his principles coincided with those of his progenitors; and there was nothing in his life, and conduct, to disgrace so honourable, a stock. Long, long, may the same spirit and character, be transmitted by his posterity, from generation to generation.

Besides the parents, this family consisted of five Sons and one Daughter. HENRY, the subject of this Memoir, was the second son; and the only present surviving branch of the family, is, JOHN FIELD, Esq. of Hitchin—the youngest Son.

Mr. Thomas Field, was engaged in agriculture: he cultivated his own paternal estate: his land "yielded its increase," by skilful and diligent management; whilst the neatness, prudence, and regularity of domestic œconomy, were maintained in his habitation, by his excellent Partner, in life.

Henry Field, was particularly indebted to his Mother, for the early culture of his mind; and still more indebted, for the moral cultivation, of his heart. Elevated to their proper rank, and their deservedly high estimation, in Society, British Females, have given abundant proof, that the most beneficial consequences, result, from *their* influence and example. But it is, in the relation of a *Mother*, feelingly alive, to the circumstances of responsibility, in which she is placed, acquainted as she is,

with every avenue, by which, the heart of her child, may be reached, and exercising, as she does, a sweet but powerful controul, over his feelings and inclinations—it is, in this relation,—that SHE appears, pre-eminently fulfilling, all that the Saviour of mankind, commanded and anticipated, when he said, " Suffer little children, to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the Kingdom of Heaven." How attractive, the lesson of Divine and Eternal Truth, to the young Immortal, when recommended by a Mother's smile ; how impressive, when enforced, by her tears. In this work of faith, and labour of love, Mrs. Field, readily and perseveringly engaged. Like the Mother of Doddridge, she took every opportunity, of imparting instruction, and employed ordinary occurrences, as the medium of its conveyance : accidental circumstances, that would have been overlooked by others, furnished her, with apposite illustrations, of the most important subjects. She had the admirable talent, of contemplating every object, as furnishing some useful moral lesson. She consequently found, there were

> " Tongues, in Trees ; Books, in the running Brook ;
> Sermons, in Stones ; and good in every thing."

A mind, that saw the Divinity, *in* all, could teach, what he was, *by* all : and in the fields where, her Husband, directed the labours, of his workmen, she marked and interpreted, the operations of her

God. But her best stores, of knowledge, were drawn from that sacred book, without whose instructions, we cannot obtain Divine wisdom.

A remarkable feature, in the character of this excellent woman, was self government; accompanied by its usual adjunct, great decision of character. No doubt can be entertained, but that the habits of self denial, forbearance, and placidity, which the subject of this memoir, evinced through life, were derived from his Mother, in a very great degree. As to her decision, he has often remarked, "*I have known my Father's determinations changed, by much persuasion, but I never recollect, that my Mother deviated, from what she proposed.*" She proceeded deliberately, in coming to a determination, but when, she had once determined, it was in vain, to think of altering her purpose.

The family at large, wore the air of patriarchal sinplicity. Though by no means deficient, in the needful forms and courtesies of life, or absolutely destitute, of graceful and polished manners; still, their's was pre-eminently, that politeness, which results from the happy combination, of good sense, good temper, and genuine religion. They were indeed uninitiated, in the meretricious arts, of a Chesterfield, but they were well acquainted with their Bible, which taught them, "how good and pleasant a thing it is, for brethren, to dwell together, in unity;" and which directs mankind,

" to be courteous," in their intercourse, with each other. The lovely charities of the Gospel, more than compensated, the want of artificial graces.

The family of Mr. Field, attended the worship of God, every Sabbath, at the Independent Chapel, in Hitchin; a distance of five miles. It may not be improper, for the purpose of shewing, how much religion entered into all his arrangements, to state, that he considered, by the appointment of God, every labouring beast, was entitled, to one day's rest out of seven: having such a conviction, the very horse employed, for the conveyance of a part of his family, to a place of worship, on the Sabbath, either roamed in the field, or rested in the stall, on the preceding Saturday, or the following Monday. The conscientious scruples, of this good man, if carried too far, are infinitely preferable, to that cruelty, wantonly inflicted on the labouring beast, in an age, that presumes on its light, and is proud of its refinement. Whether Legislative enactments, *could* effectually repress such inhumanity, may admit a doubt, but this evil would be not merely remedied, but annihilated, if religion had its proper influence, on the human heart.

Henry Field, a child of many prayers, discovered in early life, a serious and thoughtful frame of mind. How far our moral temperament, is induced by circumstances, it is difficult, if not impossible to determine: yet we can easily conceive, that

rural scenes, may exert considerable influence over the mind. An intellectual being, rising into consciousness, and beginning to exercise reflection, surrounded by natural objects, has a great advantage over another, in a crowded city, that sees only bricks and stones; men and smoke;

"God, made the Country, but Man, the Town."

Nature, in all its beautiful varieties, opened upon the dawn of reason, in Henry Field: and if he did not view these, with the poetic inspiration of a Beattie, he found them associated in his mind, with those lessons of Divine wisdom, a Mother had taught.

When quite young, he was sent to his grandmother's, at Hitchin, for the purpose of receiving his education, at a classical school, in that place. There he resided, many years, occasionally visiting his native home. The important task, which his Mother, had efficiently commenced, was successfully carried on, by his aged relative. Like Timothy, indebted to "his Mother, Lois, and his Grandmother, Eunice," he was favoured beyond most others, with the means of knowing from a child, "those Holy Scriptures, which were able to make him wise unto salvation."

Who has not observed, that Parental Love, as it descends to the *second generation*, is peculiarly characterized, by mild and soothing emotions? If

it have not all that fervour of affection, we feel for our immediate offspring, there is a pure, chastened, subdued, tenderness of heart. Like the first shades, which do but just obscure the face of nature, on a calm summer's evening, we find the loss of brilliance amply repaid, by that peculiar softness, with which every object is invested. The Christian, drawing near the close of his eventful pilgrimage, though he has no reason to say with the Roman Emperor, "*I have been all things, and all things, is nothing*"; yet finds, that the business and occupations of human life, have left behind them, the dregs of tedium, if not, of disgust.—Under these circumstances, he turns with the purest delight, to unsophisticated nature, as it is displayed, in the opening faculties of his grand children: and, is refreshed, by inhaling the fragrance, these blossoms, just expanding, diffuse. Their confidence, readily given; and the many endearing ways, by which, they twine around his heart; give to his closing scene of life, a renovated charm. Nothing is lost, or rather, much of delightful emotion is gained, when a Grandmother, is the subject of this renewed parental relation: She feels as a Mother still, bnt without the agony, of which a Mother, is too frequently susceptible. Her heart, is not wretched, her countenance, does not turn pale, when she contemplates her removal, from her Grandchildren; for if she is gone, they will be sheltered, by the wing of the parent bird. It is true, that she feels something of the pain,

of anticipated separation, and a tear occasionally flows down her furrowed cheek: she would almost wish to take those, who are so beloved, with her, to heaven; but the feeling is easily repressed, it amounts not to anxiety: and it is still more easily, changed into a prayer, that her Grandchildren may follow her, to that rest, "which remaineth, for the people of God." Into the class of feelings, we have been describing, the Grandmother of Henry Field, largely entered; for he was considerate, beyond his years; and there was every thing in him, that was gentle, and kind, and attentive. Various little offices, were entrusted to him, and her darling boy, was exalted into the character of a friend, and essentially contributed to her comfort. Never did the promises, of that holy book, in which she delighted, fall with so sweet a cadence, on her ear, as when he read them. Delightful was the communion, between the aged matron, and the well disposed child.

No specific period, can be assigned, when he became truly pious; nor was it to be expected, that he should, be able to point out, the moment of his conversion to God. Much indeed, would it contribute to the best interests of men, if they felt concerned to determine, whether *they are really converted to God*, and left, the "HOW and the WHEN," the mere circumstantials, unnoticed. Probably indeed, he became decidedly serious, at an earlier

age, than he would himself have supposed. Whilst at school, he regularly met together, with some of his school-fellows, for social prayer. In after life, perhaps from the declension of some of those, with whom he had then associated, he entertained considerable doubts, of his own sincerity in religion, at that time; the germ of piety, however, was in all probability, then formed: be this as it may, there can be no doubt, but that very early in life, personal religion commenced. His parents felt concerned, in submission to the Divine will, that he might be engaged in the service of the Sanctuary: God was pleased, to grant them this blessing; and decided seriousness, promising talents, and his own predilection for the work of the Ministry, concurring—it was thought a sufficient indication, of the leadings of Providence, in this momentous affair.

CHAPTER 2.

ACADEMICAL PURSUITS.

Dissenters are rigorously excluded, from those superior educational advantages, our Universities boast; and sometimes, with no great liberality, reviled, for the interdictions, under which, they labour: yet it has been, and continues to be, their earnest solicitude, to obtain, a well informed Ministry. Their efforts have not been *altogether* in vain: a WATTS, and a DODDRIDGE; a LARDNER, and a REES, are not exactly to be classed, with Goths and Vandals. Many Academies have been instituted, for the instruction of those, who are designed for Ministerial Labours, in Dissenting Churches.

A leading and distinguished feature, of such Institutions among the Dissenters, is formed by their being exclusively confined to those, who stand pledged, for undertaking the sacred function. It has been supposed, that an intermixture of persons,

having in view, secular objects, with those, whose great concern, should be that, of winning souls to God, might prove detrimental to the seriousness of the Christian Minister.

Another principle, on which such Institutions, are conducted, is, the qualifications required of those, who are candidates, for admission. None are supposed capable of sustaining the Ministerial Character, or, engaging in its labours, but those, who, in addition to suitable talents, can give satisfactory evidence, that they have felt, the power of religion on their hearts: nothing would be considered, as a valid and sufficient proof of this, but their having exemplified real Godliness, by their lives.

A third prominent feature, in such institutions, is, the discipline maintained. Those Tutors, under whom, the young men are placed, become responsible for their conduct: if there were any instance of criminal impropriety, nay, if there were not in the Students, a general consistency and uniformity of conduct, expulsion would immediately follow. Every day, the Students have to attend different lectures, and undergo examinations, in the various branches of instruction. A period of four or five years, out of which, there are but a few weeks allowed for a vacation, usually completes their Academical pursuits.

It is not asserted, that these Institutions, have all, or nearly all, the advantages, which a richly endowed University holds forth : but it may be admitted, that they convey *some degree* of literary and scientific knowledge, and that the course of studies pursued, are strictly regulated, with a view, to usefulness, in the Church of God.

Mr. Field, was admitted a Student, in one of the oldest, and most respectable Academies, among the Dissenters,—that of Homerton ; and applied himself so closely to his studies, as to obtain the approbation of his Tutor, and the respect of his fellow Students. His mild temper, and amiable disposition, soon rendered him, a general favorite.

A man, that would have friends, must shew himself friendly : through the neglect of this unquestionable principle of expediency, many persons find, that they are always exposed, to a turbulent atmosphere. In a state of perpetual irritation themselves, their existence seems devoted, to the annoyance of those around them. Whatever excellencies they possess, this spoils all : however we may admire and esteem, we cannot love them. We have the same kind of feeling, as those persons, who dwell on the fruitful sides of Etna : there is, a perpetual foreboding of evil. We are conscious, that a sea of fiery lava, rolls within, which by a sudden eruption, can transform a smiling paradise, into an abode, only fit for the furies.

If the ebullitions of a bad temper, be painful to others, how unhappy is the subject of it: his moral attitude, is always that of a gladiator. Like Ishmæl, he fights his way through the world, instead of living in peace and harmony. But there was every thing about Henry Field, to conciliate esteem and regard: no proud contempt, of the opinions and feelings of others; no haughty and overbearing conduct, towards his fellow students; no consequential assumption of superiority; ever gave pain to others, or filled his own mind, with the bitterness of remorse. If he had not the very highest order, of intellectual talents, there was, with a moderately gifted mind, that solidity of judgement, and that persevering diligence, which, when united to such a disposition, as he possessed, rendered him a most valuable addition to any society.

A periodical interval of relaxation, was enjoyed: the annual vacation, returned him, to his home and his friends. During this suspension of labour, his mind digested, its previous acquisitions; and obtained that elasticity, which prepared him, for future attainments. Happy indeed, was his restoration, to the bosom of his family. Every member of it, from the venerable parents, to the lowest menial, welcomed, not a prodigal, returning from riot and dissipation, to his Father's house; but, an interesting and excellent young man, the developement of whose character, rendered him, the pride

and hope of his connections. His presence, enlivened the domestic circle, added to their store of information, and conveyed intelligence, of what was going on, in the world, to their sequestered abode. Many a summer's evening, when rural toil had ceased, was the social hour prolonged, in the enjoyment of mutual converse; and many and repeated intimations, were given, by the senior part of the family, that it was *quite late*, whilst its younger branches, were hanging on their brother's lips. To, the subject of this narrative, these occasional interviews, and the seclusion, with which his annual visit, was attended, formed perhaps, the happiest æra of his life. He was then looking forward, with the ardour of a youthful mind, to his great Master's work;—enjoying the present, cheered by recollections of the past, and anticipating the future, with hope. There was nothing to detract, from the bliss he felt, for the "*one thing needful*," was possessed, and THAT crowned the whole.—RELIGION, and RELIGION ONLY, can bless man, and make him, a blessing: analyze all that relates to human nature, and the observation, will appear founded in fact; or rather, assuming the principle, take all the circumstances, which attend human life, into the account, and that fact, will be illustrated. Do the enjoyments, of social life, largely contribute, to the happiness of our species? What besides religion, united the members of this happy family, in love and harmony; "gave peace within

their walls, and prosperity within their dwelling?" Is there a mysterious spell, thrown over the beauties of nature, which gives an intellectual charm, an indefinable character of loveliness, to *that*, which is compounded of sordid elements, to *that*, which is of the earth, *earthy?* And what eye, catches its most vivid perception, what heart gives it the most ready and correct interpretation? Not the eye, not the heart of the mere man of taste, but those, of that nobler individual, whose powers have acquired a more exquisite sensibility, a more delicate touch, by the influence of religious principles and affections. A mind festering with envy, or, inflated with pride, corrupted by avarice, or, inflamed by ambition, finds neither leisure, nor inclination, for contemplating, the simple, but grand and interesting features of nature. THESE, were restored to Henry Field, combined with previous associations, which considerably heightened their effect. How enviable the feelings, awakened in his bosom, when he visited that retired spot, which had formed the rural oratory, where he had cherished his first religious impressions, derived from a Mother's lips; whose mild accents, still seemed, vibrating on his ear. Well did he then remember, the words of high and holy import, he had before uttered, in that place, "This is none other, but the house of God, and this is the gate of Heaven:" and he felt in some measure, as Jacob did, of old, when he revisited Bethel, and re-erected the altar, on that

consecrated spot,—where the lonely fugitive, obtained the immediate protection of heaven, and the patronage of God. Under many a tree, had Henry Field, wept and prayed; and many a little sequestered glen, was connected, in his recollection, with those varying emotions, which attend the commencement of religion, in the soul.

Perhaps, there are few persons, who, in their introduction to life, and removal from it, were so eminently distinguished, by the favours of an indulgent Providence, as this good man. The middle part of his life, was indeed attended with severe, but ordinary trials, yet his morning was bright, and his evening, cloudless.

CHAPTER 3.

SETTLEMENT AT BLANDFORD.

We venerate the Oak, whose withered branches, covered with moss, reminds us, that it is, the survivor of the forest: but the stamp of age, never appears so venerable, as when its lines are indented on the brow of the Christian Minister, and the hoary head of a devoted Servant of the Lord Jesus, bears its impression. The generation, to whom his labours were first directed, have, with some few exceptions, passed away; the very child, whom he took in his arms, and blest, has risen to manhood, has reached his goal, has entered his grave. Often has the aged Pastor, to administer consolation, to the widows and fatherless of those persons, whom in a state of infancy, he dedicated by baptism, to God.

As it respects, the longevity, and continuance of MINISTERS.—The CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH, at Blandford, has been remarkably circumstanced; probably, a parallel instance, is not to be found, in

the United Kingdoms. A period, of more than a Century and a half, has been filled up, by the ministerial labours, of three excellent, and valuable men. Mr. Field, and the two Ministers who preceded him, each averaged, more than *fifty years*, of actual employment, in that part of the Lord's vineyard: during so considerable a portion of time, it should seem, that,

"They ne'er had changed, nor WISHED, to change their place."

The first of these Ministers, was the Rev. Mr. POWELL, of whose history, the outlines cannot be ascertained, and whose character, has only been traditionally handed down, in general terms. The length of his continuance in one place, establishes however, a fair and highly favourable presumption, of his intrinsic worth.

He was succeeded, by the Rev. MALACHI BLAKE, a man of highly respectable talents, considerable learning, polished manners, and irreproachable conduct. His possession of an exceedingly graceful exterior, rendered him very acceptable to the higher classes of Society, by whom, his company was much sought. But though the attentions he received, were of the most flattering description, he never forgot, that he was a Christian Minister; he ever manifested, that sincere and hearty attachment to religion, which commands respect, and awes the scorner. When on a visit, to the

celebrated DODDINGTON, to whom, THOMSON has dedicated his Summer; he observed to the Statesman, after walking round his pleasure grounds, "*I have often thought, how unhappy a great man must be, to leave all these accommodations, unless he has a good hope, of obtaining Heaven.*"—The other replied, with a smile, perhaps of scepticism, "*Ah! Malachi, we must leave all that:* THAT, *we know nothing about.*" Alas! the declaration, might have had, too much of truth in it. No one could be offended with Mr. Blake, when he spoke on religious topics, for his admonitions, though faithful, had such a happy admixture of good temper, and a conciliating manner, that his very reproofs, were prized.

During his residence at Blandford, a most dreadful conflagration, took place, by which the whole Town, with the exception of a few houses, was consumed. At this period, Mr. Blake exerted himself, in doing good, to the souls and bodies of his fellow creatures. Overlooking every distinction of sect and party, he poured the balm of consolation into every heart, and was the friend of all. He pointed out, the true character of the afflictive visitation, sounded the alarm in Zion, heard the voice of the rod himself, and interpreted it, to others. He published an account of the fire, and preached, for the remainder of his life, an anniversary Sermon, on the subject. As it may prove a

gratification, to some of the Inhabitants of this Town, and its vicinity, to read the account of this melancholy event, and as the work referred to, has become, exceedingly scarce, a considerable extract is made, in the Appendix, of the statement, he published. *

Of the many excellencies, Mr. Blake possessed, there was one of the highest value, to the Christian Minister: he had a considerable talent, for *religious conversation*; and could easily, and judiciously, direct the attention of others, to those important, and eternal realities, which concerned their everlasting peace. Every opportunity, which social intercourse gave, for communications of this nature, was embraced and improved: and such opportunities were sought, if they did not present themselves. When riding over the downs, and inhaling the pure breeze, if he met a poor shepherd's boy, he would, from the occupation in which the lad was engaged, derive a medium of giving spiritual instruction, in such a familiar way, as arrested his attention, informed his mind, and perhaps, impressed his heart: if he enjoyed the rites of hospitality, in the parlour of a friend, the same object, under a diversified form, was kept in view: wherever he went, he introduced the Divine Redeemer, and seemed, like Isaiah, to have had his lips touched, "with a live coal from the altar," of burnt offering. The very courtesies of life, were

* See Note a.

studied; and its usages adopted, so far as they were innocent, that he might be all things, to all men, for the purpose of winning some to God.

At length, this labourer in the Lord's vineyard, after having sustained the burden and heat of the day, worn out, with the toils of more than half a Century, felt that his time was come; that the period was arrived, when he must cease from his sacred employment: his strength, was decayed, his faculties, weakened, and his nerves, shattered. "The grasshopper became a burden to him; the almond tree flourished, and he was afraid, of that which was high:" there was such a great degree, of nervous irritability, and morbid excitement, that when he gave out a hymn, at a social prayer meeting, he would often burst into a flood of tears. His friends, saw the necessity of his receding from labours, to which, he was no longer equal; they were, like himself, conscious of his approaching change; and they felt anxious, that before they lost, their venerable Pastor, another might be obtained; whose appointment, to the sacred office among them, should be sanctioned, by their aged friend's approbation. Application was accordingly made, to the Tutors of Homerton Academy, who united in their cordial and unanimous recommendation of Mr. Field. It would be probably saying too much, to assert, that there was no one, at this period, under their care, possessing more splendid

talents : but it may be safely affirmed, that there was no one, whom they considered more likely, to fill up his place, in the Church, and the World, with advantage to others, and honour to himself: and few opinions, have been more fully justified, by the results which followed.

When applied to, for the purpose of becoming an asssistant to Mr. Blake, with a view, to his ultimately assuming the Pastoral Office, Mr. Field, wished, to decline the engagement. With his accustomed modesty, he stated his incapacity, for such an undertaking: and informed his Tutors, that it was his intention, when his academical pursuits terminated, to return to his Paternal home, and reside there, till he felt himself, more qualified for Ministerial Labours. Had he carried this resolution into effect, his difficulties would most likely, have encreased; and, under that feeling of overwhelming diffidence, to which, he was subject through life, it is not improbable, that he would have retired altogether, from the work of the Ministry. His objections were over ruled, and by the persuasions of his Tutors, he was prevailed on, at last, to make a trial. To this he consented, and fixed in his own mind, on six weeks, as the term of his continuance at Blandford: but this was lengthened out to a period, of sixty eight years. "O Lord, the way of man is not in himself, it is not in man, that walketh, to direct his steps."

Previous to his visiting Blandford, during the latter part of his studies, he commenced preaching, as is usual, among Dissenters. But in no place, had he preached, or been heard, with such lively feelings of interest, as in the hall of his Paternal Mansion. It was there, in all probability, that he preached his first Sermon. A Mother's heart caught the words of everlasting life, from the lips of her Son; it was to her, a moment of thrilling ecstacy; she wept, and she could not avoid weeping; but every tear, bespoke delight, and gratitude, for the golden harvest, waved in rich abundance, where, she had scattered, the precious seed; her cares, her toils, her anxieties, were more than repaid, and like one of old, she said, "My Soul doth magnify the Lord, and my Spirit hath rejoiced in God, my Saviour": that Saviour, whom her Soul loved, her Son, preached. And the venerable Father too, felt unmingled satisfaction, whilst he surveyed the family group; and enumerated, as a miser counts over his treasures, the pleasing indications of seriousness, which each of his children had given. As his eye alternately glanced, from the preacher, to the most endeared of wives, and as it fixed on the listening circle, he seemed raised above mortality, and he could have said with aged Simeon, "Lord! now lettest thou thy Servant, depart in peace, according to thy word, for mine eyes, have seen thy salvation."

It will readily be conceived, that when a scene of ministerial labour and usefulness, presented itself, Mr. Field did not go to his place of destination, unaccompanied by the earnest prayers of such relatives, for his success, in that important department, to which, the Lord, had called him.

In the Year 1753, he reached Blandford, by what was then considered a rapid conveyance, and honoured with the title of a flying Coach. He came from London, a distance of one hundred and eight miles, in *only* two days and *one* night, of actual travelling; and slept another night on the road. If indeed, such a progress, was then called flying, one is exceedingly puzzled to make out, what idea, they attached in those days, to *creeping*.

Mr. Field, was cordially received, by the people of his future Flock, and he found, in the venerable Malachi Blake, a father, and a friend; one, who was eminently qualified, to impart those counsels, and encouragements, which are exceedingly serviceable, to a young Minister. In the local circumstances of Blandford, and in the Society of friends, which it gave, there was every thing congenial, to his disposition and feelings. The retirement of a small Town, was far more adapted to his taste, than a prominent and elevated station. Popularity, he never seems to have dreamt of, and certainly, never sought after, it. He admired splendid talents

in others, in the same proportion, as they appeared useful, but was altogether unambitious, of shining himself. The people, among whom he laboured, soon felt, an attachment for him, and with their aged Pastor, he *shared*, without *dividing*, their affections : without rivalship, without jealousy, both were loving, and beloved.

After he had remained in Blandford, seven years, Mr. Blake declined the Pastoral Office : he retained it thus long, at the intreaty of his young friend : whose reluctance to assume that relation to the Church, from motives of self distrust and diffidence, were with great difficulty overcome. An invitation to become their Pastor, was unanimously given by the People, and accepted on the part of Mr. Field. The day of his ordination was fixed. And he prepared for it, as a man, deeply sensible of the important charge, about to devolve on him. In the exercise of deep humiliation before God ; earnest prayer for the Divine Blessing, to rest upon his future labours ; and a solemn renewal of his dedication to the Lord, he looked forward to the hour, when he should be set apart, as the Pastor of a Church, by the "*laying on of the hands, of the Presbytery.*" This event took place, on the 28th of May, 1760. Many respectable Signatures of Dissenting Ministers, appear in the instrument, attesting his ordination : and he is described in it, as a "*Studiosum Juvenem, sobrium et pium, exploratæ Eruditionis*

et Integritatis." The very object of his Ministerial Labours, are in the same deed, delineated with care, and defined with accuracy.—Alas! every hand that signed the Testimonial, has long since, been cold in death; and every one of his fellow labourers in the Lord's vineyard, that sanctioned by their presence, this public dedication of their brother, to God and his Church, have long since, appeared with *him*, (who then received their congratulations,) before the Divine Tribunal, to give an account of their respective Stewardships.

Through the Grace of God, Mr. Field, continued to labour in that work, on which he had entered, till nearly the close of his protracted life; and retained the Pastoral Office, till his death. Oh! may he, and each one of those, who have discharged their Ministerial functions in this part of the Church, be found hereafter associated, with a goodly band, of persons, to whom their labours, have been rendered useful by the efficacious influence, of the Holy Spirit. "*For what is our hope, or joy,* "*or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye, in the* "*presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming?* "*For ye are our glory and our joy.*

CHAPTER 4.

Mr. FIELD'S FIRST MARRIAGE:—

DEATH OF HIS RELATIVES.

In the very garden of Eden, it was not good, for man to be alone; and when he was in a state of perfect innocence, the institution of Marriage, was established, by his Divine Creator. Among the corruptions of Christianity, that of dooming it's Ministers, to a state of perpetual celibacy, has been followed, by the most wretched consequences. Those fine sympathies of the human heart, called into exercise, by the conjugal tie, and the paternal relation, which so admirably qualify their possessor, for the office of a comforter, to the distrest; and a counsellor, for the tried; are, by this absurd prohibition, not only blunted, but destroyed.—"Marriage is honourable in all;" and it was not forbidden, by a secularized and worldly hierarchy, without producing the most vicious irregularities, and the most loathsome propensities: these evils, were the necessary result, of setting the absolute

constitution of our nature, at variance with the claims of religion. The consequences of such a measure, have been as distressing, as its character was odious: it gave new horrors, to the darkness of superstition; and imbued its priests, with that peculiarly inhuman and execrable selfishness, that often deluged Europe in tears, and in blood. Never would the dungeons of the Inquisition, have been thronged with human victims, never would professed zeal for the religion of Jesus, have been employed, as a Pander for the vilest lusts of Inquisitors, never would multitudes of heretics, have been sacrificed with a more infernal spirit, than that which presided over the orgies of a Moloch, or a Jagghernaut, if the Priestly Office had been sustained, by husbands, and *legitimatized* fathers: who could, without a blush, declare "these are the children, which God hath given thy servant." When the Mystery of Iniquity, to which we allude, had succeeded in destroying the best feelings of the heart, there was no difficulty, in getting men to act like fiends.

To Mr. Field, the marriage state, presented strong recommendations; it was rendered exceedingly attractive, by the picture of conjugal felicity, his own parents afforded: and after a few years residence in Blandford, he sought in Miss Pearson, of Lymington, a suitable partner for life. It will be readily supposed, from what has previously appeared of his character, that this most important

step, was not taken, without mature deliberation, and earnest prayer. His addresses met with a favourable reception, and in the early part of the year 1759, he was united with an amiable, pious, and well informed young woman. To observe, that he never repented of his choice, would be saying too little; it ought rather to be stated, that frequently in the hour of secret retirement, he poured out his soul in gratitude to God, for having blessed him, with a treasure, far better than rubies.

The first month or six weeks after marriage, was spent in visiting with his young bride, his native hamlet and his father's house. With joy, the aged parents received their son, and gave the most cordial welcome, to their interesting and excellent daughter in law, who was to supply the place of every endeared relative, to their beloved Henry. Again on the Sabbath evening, in the hall, were the members of the family, and a few persons from the scattered neighbourhood around them, convened together, for Divine worship. The strains of praise, were swelled by every tongue, and pious feelings circulated from heart to heart, when a Son, a Brother, and a Husband, preached the words of everlasting life. Alas! little did they suspect, that the family circle, would soon be broken, that the last act of mutual devotion had been celebrated, and that when they parted, it would be, to meet no more.

Mr. Field's return from this excursion, was marked by an increased degree of seriousness, and a great solicitude, about the performance of relative duties; he felt, that he moved in a new sphere of responsibility; in addition to his being, an overseer of the flock of God, he was now placed at the head of a family. To the engagements of duty, he applied himself as a Christian, and a Minister of the Gospel; acting under the conviction, that every talent he possessed, ought to be employed, for the Glory of God, and the good of his fellow creatures.

Possessing a home, in which there was seriousness, without gloom; and cheerfulness, without levity; blessed with an affectionate wife, whose character, as it opened, realized the highest expectations he had before formed of its worth; and surrounded by an affectionate people, who discovered an encreasing concern for his comfort; all seemed in promise, as the commencement of a long and bright summer's day. But that infinitely wise and gracious Being, who has our times in his hand, and our circumstances, at his disposal, had appointed Henry Field, to be early initiated, in the school of affliction, that he might learn to comfort others, "*by the comfort, wherewith he was comforted of God.*"

Scarcely had he ceased to receive, the congratutulations of his friends, on the new relation he had

formed; scarcely had the last of those visits, cusmary on such an occasion, been made; when he received the painful intelligence, that his Father had quitted this mortal state. His venerable Parent, had been for some time ill, but the end, was sudden and unexpected. This trying bereavement, was rapidly followed by another, equally severe, and still more painful, from its suddenness: the best of Mothers and the most exemplary of Wives, followed her Husband, to another and a better World, but twenty days, after his dissolution. They "were lovely in their lives, and in their death, they were not divided." In them was embodied, all that the enchanting pencil of a Thomson, has pourtrayed, of domestic bliss, connected with retirement; and in addition to such happiness, they possessed that superior and indescribable charm, thrown over the whole, which arises from the power of religion.

——————————"The rolling year,
"Still found them happy; and consenting SPRING
"Shed her own rosy garland on their heads:
"Till evening came at last, serene and mild;
"When after the long vernal day of life,
"Enamoured more, as more remembrance swell'd
"With many a proof of recollected love,
"Together down they sunk in social sleep;
"Together freed, their gentle spirits fled,
"To scenes where love and bliss immortal reign."

This double bereavement, gave exquisitely painful feelings, and Mr. Field, was as yet, but a novice in suffering. He has often mentioned to the Writer,

that it seemed to him, at this period, as if he should never have regained his usual tranquillity of mind. Thus it is with the best of men. We do not, when first afflicted, kiss the rod, with so much readiness and cordiality, as when we have become familiarized to correction. The bullock unaccustomed to the yoke, struggles to rid himself of the encumbrance. There is too, a greater perturbation of mind, when we first witness afflictive dispensations, for we have not that experimental acquaintance, of those blessed effects, with which, we afterwards find, sanctified trials are attended. "Now no affliction, seemeth for the present to be joyous, but grievous, nevertheless, AFTERWARDS it produceth, the peaceable fruits of righteousness, to them, that are exercised therewith."

The gracious dealings of an indulgent Providence, are easily discernible, in relation to this painful event: before Mr. Field, was deprived of his venerated parents, he had received a wife from the LORD: there was a bosom on which, he could repose; and to which, he could entrust his cares and his sorrows: he was possessed of one, that served to recall much of what his Mother had been, in the most eminent properties, of her character.

It was about this period, that Mr. Blake, whom he regarded as a father, and whose Ministerial labours had been prolonged, till within nearly the

last year of his life, died. The loss of his colleague, was lamented by himself, by an extensive family, connected with the deceased, and by the Church and congregation, at large. But, he made, a happy exchange of worlds, for he knew, "in whom he had believed, and was persuaded, that he would keep *that*, which he had committed unto him."

Soon after the death of his predecessor, Mr. Field became the occupant of the house, belonging to the Dissenting Interest, at Blandford, and designed for the abode of the Minister; in which he resided, till his own death, a period of nearly sixty years. One generation passed away, another succeeded, and a third sprung up, still he was there, and not "as a cumberer of the ground."

The same year, that deprived him, of his Parents, rendered him, a Father: but the infant blossom had no sooner expanded, than it withered and fell. Serious apprehensions, were at this time felt, for Mrs. Field herself, in whom, there appeared some alarming indications of a debilitated constitution, but returning health and strength, gave the promise of lengthened existence. Again the song of gratitude, burst from his heart; and the fair perspective of hope, presented itself to his mind: alas! these appearances, were not more lovely than fallacious; he stooped to taste the stream of earthly bliss, but, it receded from his lips. Another long

and dangerous illness, of his beloved wife, took place. By earnest prayer, he sought to avert the blow, or to be prepared, for sustaining it. Frequent warnings were given, but the bereavement, was still mercifully delayed; for He, who knoweth our frame, who remembereth, that we are dust, accommodates his dispensations, to our weaknesses and infirmities: He will not lay upon us, "more than we are able to bear."

At length, in the year 1765, the "*desire of his eyes, was cut off with a stroke;*" his habitation became desolate; and he was constrained, "*to bury his dead, out of his sight.*" He had now the advantage of being, not an inexperienced sufferer; the lesson of submission, had been before learnt; he was resigned to the will of God; and the poignant feelings of affliction, were moderated, by the assured persuasion, that the disembodied Spirit of *her*, whom he had so tenderly loved, was clothed upon, "with *that* building of God, *that* house, not made with hands, *eternal* in the heavens." He felt and deplored, the pang of mortal separation, but then he contemplated, mortality itself, as "being swallowed up of life." He found a spiritual joy, intermingling itself, with the heaviest earthly trials of the Christian. Thus the brilliant colours, of the prismatic arch, are spread over the dark cloud. "But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, "concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow

"not, even as others which have no hope. For if "we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even "so them also which sleep in Jesus, will God bring "with him." Greatly does the writer regret, that strict, and as he conceives, improper prohibition of his deceased friend, which prevents, an extract being made from his Diary: this would so fully exhibit the frame of Mr. Field's mind, as to enable the religious public, to form their own estimate, of his character; and might prove of salutary tendency, to those, who have to wade through the deep waters of affliction. But as this, *must not* be done, it only remains to state, that he felt, as every good man, would wish to feel, under those trying circumstances. The funeral Sermon of Mrs. Field, was preached by the Rev. Mr. Wright, of Ringwood: he represented man, as frail, mortal, perishing; and spoke of the Divine Word, as inspiring, the glowing hope of immortality: he stood on the grave, but he pointed to glory:—he expatiated, on that sublime passage, "The voice said Cry. And "he said, What shall I cry? All flesh is grass, "and all the goodliness thereof, is as the flower of "the field: The grass withereth, the flower fadeth, "because the Spirit of the Lord bloweth upon it: "surely the people is grass. The grass withereth, "the flower fadeth; but the word of our God shall "stand for ever." This interesting portion of the word of God, pertinently illustrated, and affectionately applied, had a sweet and soothing influence,

on the mourner in Zion: it gave him, "the oil of joy, for mourning, and the garment of praise, for the Spirit of heaviness."

In his bereaved and widowed state, his Christian friends, collected around their Minister, suggested to him, those consolations, which they had heard from his lips; and held social prayer meetings, to implore, that the supporting presence of God, might be vouchsafed to him. These petitions, which their deeply sympathising hearts presented, at a throne of Grace, were not unheard; answers to prayer were given, and they saw their Pastor, come from the house of Mourning, to the Sanctuary, better qualified than ever, for its sacred and important duties: They saw, and "glorified God, in him."

The heart, it has been said, "wants something to love:" of his marriage, one dear pledge remained, a sweet child, in whose countenance he could trace her Mother's features: she was rendered still more interesting, by her intellectual talents, which were of a most promising description; at five years old, Mr. Field has described her, as having been a companion, rather than a child. Perhaps indeed, a degree of allowance must be made, for the feelings of one, who was now, *only* a Father: no doubt can be entertained, but that she was a child of very considerable ability; and there is perhaps, as little reason to doubt, that his partial eye, magnified

every good quality. How indeed, could it have been otherwise, in his peculiar circumstances? But prized and dear as this flowret was, she was not long spared to him; about six months, after her Mother's death, she followed her parent to the regions of glory. Though wave followed wave, and the man of affliction, seemed to be left, alone on the earth, yet trust and confidence in God, supported his mind: he saw the wreck of all, in which delight centered, and on which hope leaned, but he *blest* his God, and *lived.*

Whilst Religion supported his mind, Friendship poured its balm, into his wounded heart. Surrounded as he was, by much valued friends, of approved worth, it might seem invidious, to make a particular selection; yet, we may without becoming liable, to the charge of partiality, mention one, whose temper and habits, were so perfectly congenial to Mr. Field's, that like David and Jonathan, they seemed made for each other. The gentleman alluded to, is Mr. Tice, who removed, a few years previous to his death, from Blandford, to Christchurch. The seeds of friendship, in both, were watered, with the tears of affliction. Mr. Tice, had recently lost a Parent. This had occasioned his removal from Chard, for the purpose of succeeding his Father, in the Medical line, at Blandford. The circumstance, attending his Father's death, deserves notice, as supplying another proof, that "in the midst of life,

we are in death." He had long been in a declining state of health, but was not considered, as dangerous ;—when, one day, the Servant of a gentleman, in the neighbourhood, was violently thrown from his horse ; as the injury received, was serious, a messenger, was immediately dispatched, requesting Mr. Tice's attendance. Alive, to the call of humanity, he instantly set off in a post chaise, for the spot ;—he soon found the man's case hopeless, but having rendered all the assistance in his power, he returned; but before he had reached his own residence, the " silver cord was loosed, and the golden bowl was broken ;" he was taken out of the chaise, in a state of insensibility, carried into his house, laid on his bed, and in the course of a short time, he breathed his last. The interval of a few hours, only transpired, between his death, and that of the patient, for whom his assistance was requested.

It was at this juncture, that a friendship was cemented, between these brothers in affliction : their hearts, would have been united, by sentiment and feeling ; but their peculiar circumstances, gave an additional interest, and a heightened character, to their mutual attachment. Often has the writer, been priviledged, to form a third person in their company ; and he felt a kind of sacred pleasure diffused over his mind, when he witnessed, that friendship, which half a Century, had only served to

encrease.—Through all the chequered scenes and changing vicissitudes of human life, this plant still retained its perennial bloom. Amidst the infirmities of age, it appeared, as the solitary flower, that blows on the ruined and desolated pile, and never seems so beautiful, as when it decorates, the mouldering wall.

Thus, in the course of a very few years, were the dearest earthly connections, riven asunder. "*Surely man at his best estate, is altogether vanity.*" We have seen a man of like passions, with ourselves, stript of all, that human nature, holds most dear; and yet, only raised by the waves, that one should be ready to imagine, must prove overwhelming. One testimony more, is added, to the efficacy of religion, and the power of Divine Truth, in supporting the mind under all circumstances of distress: "*We glory in tribulations also: knowing* "*that tribulation worketh patience; and patience,* "*experience; and experience, hope; and hope ma-* "*keth not ashamed; because the love of God is shed* "*abroad in our hearts, by the Holy Ghost, which is* "*given unto us.*"

CHAPTER 5.

Mr. FIELD'S MINISTRY.

That courageous servant of the Lord, whose intrepidity could not be more highly eulogised, than by representing, the immediate forerunner of Christ, "as coming in the spirit and power of Elias;" once displayed symptoms of cowardice.—What made *him*, fly from the great work of reformation, he had so well begun, and constrained him to pray for an immediate dismissal from mortality? Why did Elijah, before whom the Prophets of Baal, were scattered as the chaff before the whirlwind, request for himself, that he might die, and said, "It is enough; now, *O Lord, take away my life, for I am not better, than my fathers?*" The answer is readily given,—he viewed himself, as an isolated being, left alone, to struggle in a desperate cause; for such, his fears exhibited it, in this season of trepidation and discouragement: *I, even I, only am left.* But it was the happiness of Mr. Field, to

be connected with a party, which however unnoticed, and even disesteemed, by the great and the noble, yet supplied him with many associates, in the work of the Ministry; by whose friendship, his hands were strengthened, and his usefulness promoted. He was accustomed to hold periodical meetings, with the Dissenting Ministers, of neighbouring Towns, in the County, and the object of such associations, was mutual benefit. These interviews with his brethren, and the devotional engagements, connected with them, are particularly specified in his diary, as having been pleasant and profitable.

The constitution of Congregational Churches, excludes every secular tie, by which the Ministers of religion, are bound up together, as with paper and pack thread, into a heterogeneous mass, without being amalgamated. The Pastors of these Churches, standing perfectly, on the same level, as to office, rank, authority—associate together, merely from sentiment and feeling. And yet there is among them, what has been considered by some, a great desideratum, UNIFORMITY; cordial, because it is sincere; and sincere, because it is voluntary.

Never were the meetings, to which allusion has been made, more grateful to Mr. Field, than in the time of affliction. Many of his brethren, had like himself, been greatly tried; like *his*, their graces

had been purified in the furnace ; they had, like him, endured the fiery trial, and they came forth as gold, seven times refined. Their serious conversation, their brotherly kindness, and above all, their fervent prayers, encouraged him, in his pious course, and gave energy, to his ministerial labours.

Mr. Field, was likewise exceedingly happy with his people ; they felt an attachment to him, more distinguished, by strength of principle, than warmth of passion. They would indeed, have been strangely wanting discernment, if they had not "esteemed him, very highly in love, for his work's sake." His pulpit exercises, whilst distinguished by a rich vein of piety, were always respectable in point of talent. If those who heard him, were seldom astonished, by the burst of genius ; they were never disgusted, by unmeaning and vapid declamation : there were always solid, if not shining qualities ; if he never soared, as the eagle, he never crept like a reptile. It is highly probable, that in the whole course of his Ministry, a light and frothy expression, did not once escape his lips ; when engaged in the service of the Sanctuary, he never

"Courted a grin, when he should woo, a soul."

His discourses, were for the most part, plain and unadorned ; for the structure of his mind, was more strongly marked, by solidity of judgement, than

warmth of imagination. Though he was accustomed to read great part of his Sermons, yet it was, with considerable energy. A stronger illustration of this fact, cannot perhaps be given, than by stating the following circumstance. There was a man, who with a slight touch of insanity, retained very considerable acuteness of intellect; and particularly exercised it, in examining the manner of preachers, and sometimes pointed out their defects, *sans ceremonie*, with sarcastic bitterness; but he was so pleased and impressed, with Mr. Field's manner of delivery, that he usually addressed him thus, "*Reverend Sir, I heard you preach, and your voice is like thunder.*"

His sentiments were *Calvinistic*, but not outrageously so; not *hyper-calvinistic*. There was not indeed, in him, that over weening attachment to system, which makes the word of God, what the Statute Book is, to a Counsel, in that strange moment of legal fascination, when he can only see the laws of his Country, through the medium of his brief; and can only judge of their decisions, by the criterion, his *fee* supplies. Most cordially would Mr. Field, have joined in the following sentiment, advanced by a venerable Clergyman, of the Established Church. "He has no doubt, that there is a system in the Holy Scriptures; (for truth cannot be inconsistent with itself:) but he is persuaded,

that neither Calvinists, nor Arminians are in *exclusive* possession of that system. He is disposed to think, that the Scripture system, be it what it may, is of a broader and more comprehensive character, than some very exact and dogmatical Theologians, are inclined to allow: and that, as wheels in a complicated machine, may move in opposite directions, and yet subserve a common end, so may truths, *apparently opposite*, be perfectly reconcileable with each other, and equally subserve the purposes of God, in the accomplishment of man's salvation." This quotation, in which the writer has indulged, defines much better than he could have done himself, the principle and character of Mr. Field's mode of preaching. He did not shun to declare, the whole counsel of God; he gave to the most important truths, their just prominence and relief; but he was no systematising preacher. In a happier period of the Church, men will perhaps be content, to be wise, *according* to what is written, not *above* it: and whilst they derive more copiously their materials for faith and practice from the bible, they will treat it with greater reverence, than to attempt taking its admeasurement, by the human line and compass. This sacred book, like the Alps and the Andes, has its proportions and symmetry, but it is probably no more capable of being reduced to a system, than these immense chain of mountains, can be identified with any order of human architecture.

As he was not a systematic, so neither, was he a polemical Divine. He came to the Holy Scriptures, not for weapons of controversy, but for the bread of life. Deriving his own stability and comfort from the truth, as it is in Jesus, he aimed at nothing more than bearing, a simple and unvarnished testimony, to its importance and value. Leaving others, to explore the intricate mazes of a subtle and disputatious Theology, he confined himself, to what was plain and obvious,—and preached the Gospel: he well knew, "*that the weapons of our warfare, are not carnal, but spiritual, and mighty, through God, to the pulling down of strong holds.*"

A devout spirituality of mind, was cultivated, in all religious exercises. He found the engagements of the Sabbath, peculiarly gratifying, and oftentimes represents himself, as retaining the impressions of seriousness, which they left on his mind, throughout the week. On the Sabbath Evening, he was accustomed to retire and meditate—to reflect on the past, with mingled emotions of gratitude and penitence—and to look forward to the future, with prayer and dependance upon God.

It will readily be supposed, that his private deportment, corresponded with his public engagements; and that his people found a consistency between his Preaching and his Life. One thing

must have proved rather a drawback, to this intercourse ; Mr. Field, though not to be denominated, like a certain eminent Author, the *silent Man*, was not inclined to converse freely.

He has often lamented, that his natural reserve, rendered free conversation, exceedingly difficult: and probably, if in any respect, his friends could have wished an alteration in him, it would have been, that he had possessed a more communicative and conversational habit. This defect, will be found in many instances, constitutional, and what is worse, incurable. Pitiable is the state of that man, who attempts to speak, only to be frightened by the sound of his own voice: and from whose lips, the unfinished sentence falls, in hesitating and tremulous accents. This may be sport, to others; but it is death to him: the embarrassment felt, he vainly endeavours to free himself from ; his efforts, like those of the bird, fluttering on the limed twig, only entangle him still more. Reserve was not indeed, thus extreme in Mr. Field, but it had so much influence, as to produce considerable taciturnity, and he has often mentioned to the writer, that he had *in silence, given up the matter, and must be content with hearing others, for he could never bring himself to talk, in a mixed or even large company.* It is certainly not a little mortifying, that flippant, and self confident verbosity, should rise like a bubble, and dance like a feather, on that

wave, with which the man, of cultivated mind, but of retiring habits, struggles, almost even to drowning.

There were higher qualities, than readiness and fluency of expression, which endeared Mr. Field, to his flock. His exemplary conduct, unassuming deportment, tried integrity, and peaceful temper, were like "*an epistle known and read of all men.*" As a friend, he was sympathising and faithful. His diary contains a large record, of what passed in his mind, relative to the concerns of others, and shews how lively an interest, he took in their individual circumstances.

CHAPTER 6.

SECOND MARRIAGE.—FAMILY CIRCLE.

It is a consolatory reflection, that if human society, be so constituted, that exposure must attend the worst vices, by which it is disgraced; the very nature of its construction, affords a shelter, and extends a scope, for the exercise of those Domestic Virtues, whose salutary tendency, checks the progress of demoralization, and forms a kind of redeeming power, by which Man is elevated to moral dignity and usefulness. This circumstance is not always, duly considered, by the Philanthropist, when forming his estimate of human nature: he sees the evil, this is too apparent; but the good is concealed, and escapes his notice: his heart must bleed, if his eye only glance, at the outward appearance of things: yet a barren and rocky surface, often covers the richest and most precious metals. A man, whose heart is in it's right place, but who reasons superficially,—reads a Newspaper, and

finds in it, a record of crimes; he hears the rumours of the day, and it is but a disclosure of sin and folly: with that morbid feeling, in which the most amiable of men, (the Author of the TASK) too much indulged,—he exclaims—

——————————"My ear is pain'd,
My heart is sick, with every day's report,
Of wrong and outrage, with which earth is fill'd."

Though the sentiment, might originate, in the purest feelings of benevolence, it betrays a judgement determined by partial evidence, and erroneous in its sweeping conclusions; it is generalising, where we ought to discriminate; it is confounding *some*, with *all*. As well might we think of forming a criterion, of the morals of a County, by the character of those criminals, lodged in its goals for trial. Let us be thankful, that much good is working in secret, whilst publicity is given to evil in general: the sentences passed at the Assizes upon felons; and the dying confession of the malefactor, are hawked about our streets; whilst the excellencies of the good and virtuous, though unproclaimed, and not even fully appreciated by the circle, in which they move,—are silently, yet efficaciously diffusing their influence.

NO, the earth, bad as it is, is not quite full of wrong and outrage. Call it if you please, a wilderness, but even in that case, there is many a beau-

tiful and fertile Oasis blooming in the midst of it's barren sands: many an Enon, like that, to which the Israelites came, where *three score and twelve palm trees*, extended their branches, laden with fruit; and *twelve wells*, furnished an abundant supply of water, to the Lord's heritage.

Such was the family of Henry Field: God blessed HIM, and made *him*, a BLESSING: his virtues were eminently of the domestic kind.

He entered again into the marriage state; his second wife was, Miss SARAH TICE, of Blandford; a Sister of that valuable friend, whose name has been previously mentioned, and whom brotherhood in affliction, had already endeared. A large and amiable circle, every name of which had been long before enrolled in the number of his friends, were brought into a still nearer contact, by the formation of relative interests. The union gave a renovated charm to life itself, and opened a delightful perspective of future comfort: Alas! we live but to discover, that the gourd, under which we promise ourselves, a perennial shade, is formed of withering materials.

If to the chastened expectations of Mr. Field, on the subject of human happiness, there were any circumstances, which seemed to give unequivocally its hope and promise, they were, those of the

marriage state: there is no reason indeed, to suspect, that his mind indulged romantic expectations, yet his judgement could not but receive a favourable prejudice, from the union, which had subsisted, between his own Father and Mother. God probably disappoints some of the best founded anticipations of his people, to teach them, that this is not their rest: thus it was at least in the experience of this good man. Of two most excellent women, one was early taken from his arms, and the other was the subject, of severe and lingering illness, which commenced, a few years after her marriage, and continued till death. Having already seen Mr. Field in the character of a sufferer, it will be perhaps unnecessary to enter into a detail, which might prove uninteresting to the Reader; as it would not serve to develop any new trait of character, and would be attended, so far as relates to the patience and resignation evinced by the subject of this memoir, with a bare repetition of what has been previously stated. It may be sufficient to observe, that as the dark ground of a picture, gives a rich brilliancy, to its lighter colouring, thus his afflictions served to exhibit the passive graces of a retiring character. Nor did he only bear his trials with patience and resignation, but in the exercise of the most affectionate sympathy and inexhaustible tenderness, he soothed, comforted, and supported his afflicted Partner.

A general resemblance between the Husband and the Father, is commonly maintained; what a person is, in one relation, he will usually be, in another: but *such* a husband, and *such* a father, as Mr. Field, are rarely to be found.

The delicate state of Mrs. Field's health, devolved on him, a much greater than ordinary share, of parental anxiety, not to say, labour: with a maternal solicitude too great for her enfeebled frame, she endured the fatigues of the Nurse, when the sufferings of the Mother, in giving life at the peril of her own, had reduced her to the very borders of the grave. She would allow her babe, to be cradled on no bosom but her own, though *that* could not supply, the nutriment, infancy demanded. Whatever might have been his secret wishes, however the language of his heart might have been, to his beloved Partner, "*spare thyself*"—he had too much affection, to urge her parting with her infant; and entrusting it to the arms of a stranger: he therefore alternately took charge of it by night, and while he watched, the Mother was satisfied; and he had the satisfaction of finding that she often enjoyed repose, in those hours, he had denied sleep to his eyelids for her sake. The writer learnt this from his venerable friend, when he was sportively observing, that he thought, he could almost undertake to rear an infant: his furrowed countenance is vividly recollected at this moment, as curved

by an arch smile, after having excited his young friend's incredulity, by asserting, "*I supplied my infants in the night, as frequently as their Mother.*"

As his children grew up, he who had learnt to obey, knew how to command; but his government was Patriarchal, not Despotic; and his authority, was always clothed with the garb of love. He was indeed, unacquainted with the great ascendancy, which he obtained over that circle, where he moved by the meekness of wisdom; and supposed that his influence over the minds of others, arose from some accidental circumstance; he has often remarked, that it appeared to him, a great mercy, he had only daughters, for he feared that he should have greatly failed in the management of boys: so little did he know himself, so little was he acquainted with one of the most positive excellencies of his character.

The greatest punishment his children dreaded, was that of being reproved for their faults in their Papa's study: into it's hallowed precincts, they entered with that trembling awe, which forms a striking contrast with the hardihood manifested by some young offenders, in a court of Justice itself; and accused, not of the petty faults of childhood, but of crimes that would disgrace maturer years. Ah! how unspeakable the obligations of well educated children, to a kind and indulgent Providence

for granting them Parents, "*who bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.*" This simple fact, is worth volumes of panegyric, on Mr. Field's management of his children: *those little ones*, who with sportive gambols, twined about his neck, and climbed his knee—*those, little ones*, who never felt so happy, as in their father's presence, dreaded his rebuke, as the heaviest correction that could be inflicted.

Preserved from the contagion of evil by his mild discipline, which like the verdant fence around the springing corn, has thorns to repel intrusion, whilst it only presents to the eye, a garland of snowy or empurpled blossoms,—Protected under his shade, and finding a spot there, congenial to the growth and expansion of every good quality, as the violet when opening its petals beneath the Oak or the Elm,—And above all, favoured with the gracious influence of Him, who has promised that He will be "*as the dew unto Israel,*" yea, that "*He will pour his Spirit upon the seed of his servants, and his blessing upon their offspring:*" so "*that they shall spring up as among the grass, as willows by the water courses*"—the Daughters of this good man, as they rose into life, as they assumed the rank of moral agents, and accountable creatures—drank into their father's principles, and imbibed their father's spirit: they felt concerned to join themselves unto the Lord, "*in a perpetual Covenant, that should*

not be broken." Those children, whom he had dedicated to God, by Baptism, he saw renewing their Baptismal Covenant, at the Lord's table; and receiving from his own hands, the sacred elements, symbolically exhibiting the body and blood of the Redeemer.

There are numerous circumstances, which ruffle the flow of domestic tranquillity: with one, Mr. Field was deeply affected; a Servant, who had but a short time before, engaged in his service, was visited with sudden death. This awful event led him, to examine with great solicitude, respecting what had been done by him, for promoting the salvation of *her* soul, who had been thus hurried into the eternal state. He felt, as every christian must feel, when an investigation of this kind, is close and impartial, deeply humbled before God, and expresses himself, as being self condemned, for having done no more. Alas! that every relation, we sustain, should not only present us, with a list of duties, but remind us, at least, of a catalogue of the sins of omission.

How chequered are the scenes of human life, when recording the history of one, of our species, we have often to make the most abrupt transitions: we have often to speak in the same breath, of an event which dissolves all the ties of consanguinity, and of an incident which unites in the tenderest

bonds of union, two human beings, and renders their hopes and their fears, their joys and their sorrows, perfectly mutual. Not that these events may be near in point of time; but there may be *these* only, which are particularly deserving notice. It was the happiness of Mr. Field, to witness one of his surviving Daughters entering the marriage state, under circumstances, which gave him the fullest satisfaction. On this point, feelings of delicacy and respect, forbid the writer's enlarging: suffice it to remark, that the union formed, was hallowed with the warmest blessing, of a Father by whom it was most cordially approved.

In April, 1797, Mrs. Field closed a life of tribulation, by so gentle a dismission from Mortality, that though exceedingly ill, her death when it took place, might be called sudden: her attendants did not know that she was dead, till some time after she had actually expired. A Gentleman for whom Mr. Field had always entertained the warmest friendship, the Rev. Mr. Edwards, of Dorchester, preached her funeral Sermon, from these words, "To die is gain": a discourse, which imparted great consolation, to the heart of his afflicted friend: and brought near, those views of future happiness, that enable the christian to look above the grave, and to feel that an exchange of worlds, is his greatest blessing.

CHAPTER 7.

DECLINE OF LIFE.

There has been probably no class of relative duties, so clearly defined, so faithfully enforced, and so elaborately illustrated, as those which relate to the Ministerial Office. This may be principally owing, to the actual experience, which the Persons by whom these duties were exhibited, had of their nature and importance. Representations on this subject, have been ordinarily made by Ministers sufficiently advanced in their work, to know accurately and extensively, the duties it includes. That Pilot can well explain, the chart of a dangerous sea, among whose shoals and quicksands, he has himself found the difficulty of steering. But of the many excellent works published, on Ministerial duties and engagements, there is one point seldom alluded to, though by no means unimportant; it is that of a Minister's retiring with dignity from his work, when his faculties decline, and his labours cease to have their wonted efficiency. It is some what painful to witness the infirmities of age, taxed

beyond their strength, and giving exposure to mental weakness and imbecility. There is however much to be pleaded, in favour of the Minister who retains his situation, *rather* too long. It should not be hastily attributed to the indulgence of selfishness, or the love of popularity; when perhaps it is only the desire of usefulness. Might not something too be allowed, for those feelings derived from strength of habit? In the pulpit he has been as much at home, as in his parlour, and there is something cruel in driving an old man into exile. It appears desirable, that the veteran should retain his post, and this might be effected in many instances, if a younger labourer were associated with him, in the work. This is sometimes indeed impracticable, for the aged Pastor has no other means of support, than what his salary affords, and that admits not of division, it hardly supplies the wants of the passing hour.

Happily, the last mentioned reason, did not apply to Mr. Field; and as he was not even tempted by circumstances of a temporal nature, to retain his post too long, so neither did he feel alarmed at the thought, of another's sharing with him, in the respect and affections, of the people of his charge.

As he approached his three score years and ten, he would willingly have resigned the Ministerial

office entirely: this however, the Church and Congregation would not permit him to do: but requested that a middle course might be taken; that he would obtain an assistant, by whose aid, he might be enabled still to retain the Pastoral Office.

This method was adopted, and several Gentlemen in the Ministry, successively assumed the character of Assistants to Mr. Field, and remained with him, for a season, of those, it might be fairly assumed, that there was not one, who did not feel the highest esteem for a man, that was beloved by all good men; and most highly prized by those, who stood in the nearest relation to him. Should these pages meet the eye of the Gentlemen alluded to, the writer can assure them, that their names were uniformly mentioned by his venerable friend, with respect and kindness.

In the Year 1801, the Individual writing this little work, was conducted by a Gentleman from a neighbouring Town, to Blandford, for the purpose of preaching at that place, and having an interview with Mr. Field; but without the most remote idea on his part, of being connected with him, in the work of the Ministry: he thought himself at that time decidedly fixed, for another situation. Nearly a twelvemonth afterwards, when he had determined on relinquishing that station, he received a kind and warm invitation from Mr. Field, to preach

at Blandford, for a few Sabbaths ; he did so, and this was followed by another, for a twelvemonth ; before the twelvemonth had elapsed, a third invitation was given, in which his venerable Friend, and the Church and Congregation, unanimously requested him, to become Co-Pastor. That event took place in the same year. Perhaps without incurring the charge of egotism, the writer may be permitted to remark, that to this period, he cannot advert, without the liveliest feelings of interest and gratitude. He would thankfully acknowledge, that he has been highly privileged; that it falls not to the lot of many, to be introduced to the Ministry of the Gospel, under circumstances so peculiarly favourable: and he would be deeply sensible how gracious the dealings of HIM, from whom "every good and perfect gift proceeds," in having spared his invaluable friend so long. Nineteen years have been spent, with his venerable Colleague, in the enjoyment of the most perfect harmony; not suspended by a momentary interruption, or diminished by the slightest difference.

All, who have read the preceding statement, must be aware, how well qualified Mr. Field was, for becoming, a FATHER and a FRIEND, to a young Minister : and though the writer cannot, dares not flatter himself, that he has fully availed himself of the privilege ; yet he hopes that it has not been totally lost upon him: separated as he now is, from

the friend of his youth, he feels thankful in the consciousness of having experienced a filial solicitude, to shew by dutiful attentions, how much he revered and loved him: and of one thing he is morally certain, that however short he fell, in the performance of what he ought to have done, in requital of such friendship, yet he never grieved his aged friend.

The Prayer offered by Mr. Field, previous to the Ordination of his Colleague, is mentioned in the Funeral Sermon, and in addition to this, another little incident may be specified; for circumstances apparently trivial, form perhaps the best index of the heart; a straw will teach us the direction of the wind. A short time after the event refered to, had taken place, the Writer mentioned to Mr. Field, his intention of going from home, for a month; there was a slight emotion perceptible on his countenance, or rather the expression of thoughtfulness—he paused for a short time, and then replied "*I don't think, it will be quite right, for you to go out, just after you are ordained, consider, the people want to hear you.*"—'*No, No,*' added he,—his countenance, assuming its usual tranquil smile—'*we cannot spare you yet.*' Superior to every feeling, but that of kindness, his aim was, to encrease the attachment, subsisting between his young friend and the Church, to which he had been united: and thus it was in every

instance. Alas! never more, will the feeble pressure of that withered hand be felt,—never more after the separation of a few weeks, will he say with a countenance brightened by the expression of kindness, to one who laboured with him, as a Son in the Gospel—"*Welcome again to Blandford.*"

His labours were continued for nearly seventeen years after this period, though occasionally suspended, in consequence of illness. The Sabbath Morning, was selected by him, as his season for preaching; then he felt his intellectual powers more vigorous, and his physical strength, was more equal to the undertaking.

It is scarcely possible to conceive of a state of existence, more tranquil, than the last twenty years of his life: in his family, in his Church, in the circle of his friends at large, all was peace and comfort.

The strength of fraternal attachment, between himself and his brothers, who resided at considerable distances from him, was retained in its full vigour, till that moment, when all human connections are dissolved. It does not always happen, that the members of a numerous family, when they quit the paternal roof, and form establishments of their own, continue to feel the same warmth of affection, towards each other. If discord does not

prevail, there is often a coldness bordering upon alienation. Religion sometimes the innocent cause of separation, formed in this case, the bond of union. There was generally once, every year, a meeting of all the surviving branches of the family, alternately held at their respective places of abode. This was continued, till age rendered journeying in some degree impracticable ; it was not then given up without reluctance, nor at once relinquished : visits were still made, but less frequent ; an interval of two or three years occurred, and for the few last years of their lives, they did not meet. "*I find a great difference in myself*" said Mr. Field to the Writer, just before he set out on his last journey to meet his brothers, "*you can hardly think, what a great dislike, not to say dread, I have of going from home.*"

His eldest Daughter lived with him, till her decease, which was rather more than two years before his own. Her natural cast of mind, was lively, and her mental powers, of a superior description. For more than twenty years before her death, she was nearly deprived of sight. The books that had amused, edified, instructed, became useless—

"And Wisdom at one entrance, quite shut out."

Her imagination, could no longer, wander with the Poet; nor her devotional feelings, catch a flame,

from the sacred page. But she had a Father, and that Father, who had done more in his childhood, for an aged Grandmother, than could have been expected from riper years, did all in his old age, for the comfort of his Daughter, that Maternal tenderness itself, could have suggested: whatever books, he read, they were read to her. The Writer has at this moment, a lively recollection, of what he almost invariably saw, when he entered the parlour: on one side of the fire-place, sat Miss Field skeining thread, an employment which required not sight, and on the other side his aged friend, putting in the slip of paper, that served as a remembrance of the page, and closing the volume. There is something exceedingly affecting, when we contemplate the Daughters of Milton, reading to their blind Father, and a counterpart to this, is certainly formed, by the employment of a venerable man, more than seventy years of age, in reading to a blind Daughter.

His Grandchildren became at this period of life, a source of gratification; they soon learnt to love him, and a visit was very frequently made to Grandpapa, and Aunt Field—and never were visitors more welcome. Many a pleasing hour was spent, and many a book laid aside, whilst the sportiveness of childhood enlivened the parlour. It has been beautifully observed by Paley, when speaking of the Divine Benevolence, that " the contemplation

of universal nature rather bewilders the mind, than affects it. There is always a bright spot in the prospect, upon which the eye rests. "I seem" *he observes*, "for my own part, to see the benevolence of the Deity, more clearly, in the pleasure of very young children, than in any thing in the world." Though not forming quite a parallel circumstance to this, yet the pleasure found by aged persons, in the company of their Grandchildren, exhibits, in a very striking manner, the same principle.

One confession must be made, and perhaps it is best to confess the worst at once—*horrendum dictu*, Mr. Field smoked! This, a Gentleman whose talents, none can but admire, and whose decisions few will be hardy enough to controvert—has termed a "*sottish practice.*" It is strange that "*the pipe of lily white,*" on which the devout Ebenezer Erskine, could soliloquise and spiritualize, should become in the present generation, a Pandora's box—the source of all mischief. Mr. Field smoked more than sixty years, but maintained through life, the most abstemious habits. Perhaps like Mithridates, he had taken the poison so often, that he was proof against it: or, he might as to his pipe have been in possession of some secret charm, like those, who are said to have the power of fascinating serpents: certain it is, that he never sustained any injury. But this shall be left, as Francis Moore, Physician,—the

Almanack-maker, says of his Hieroglyphics,—"for time and the learned to construe."

Mr. Field retained his evenness of temper to the last hour of his life, and he was exceedingly cheerful and vivacious; his conversation was usually enlivened with anecdotes, of which he had an abundant store; or, with fanciful sallies of mind, as harmless and as pleasing, as the Aurora Borealis, when its flashes glance athwart the skies of Autumn. The smaller number of persons, there were in his company, the more freely his stream of conversation flowed. In walking alone with him, the Writer has often felt his smile excited, by that dryness of manner, which commands, rather than invites the risible faculties. "*So young man*, with a serious face, *I find you are very bold and enterprising.*" Why Sir? "*A'nt you trying to get married?—But do you know what Lord Bacon, says of Marriage?*" No indeed. "*Why he tells us, that it is like a man's searching for an eel, in a bag full of snakes—but*" added he, "*I dipped twice, and have reason to be thankful, that I got two eels.*" This conversation, jocularly begun, would terminate probably, in a train of serious observation; without placing himself in the professor's chair, laying aside everything that savoured of magisterial pomp, he would teach, while he only seemed to talk.

As his morning of life, commenced with the love

of nature, so his evening closed in, with the enjoyment of its beauties. He had unwisely, as he frequently observed, during the former part of his life, often denied himself the enjoyment of walking, considering that it was, a useless mode of spending time. He afterwards, better understood the matter, and found that this practise would at once contribute, to enjoyment, and give efficiency, to study: he therefore every day, when the weather permitted, took at least a morning walk; and till within the last few years of his life, it was of considerable extent. His early acquaintance, with the whole of the Agricultural department, made its operations highly interesting; and perhaps, there were few Farmers in the neighbourhood, who could form a better judgment of the prospects of the year, than himself. The walks of his green old age, which have often tired his colleague, when first connected with him—were gradually contracted as infirmities encreased, and he said about half a year before his death, when a person who met him, rather more than a mile from home, congratulated him, on having walked so far—"*Ah! I walked better at four years old, than I do now.*"

CHAPTER 8.

LAST ILLNESS AND DEATH.

To be reconciled to Death on the best principles, does not imply that the love of life, must be annihilated; nor is attachment to the present state of existence, irreconcilable with the exercise of faith. Though in that unknown world to which we are hastening, the soul will be introduced to a nobler sphere of being, and exert powers of whose extent and brilliance, we can form no suitable conceptions, whilst it is imprisoned in its clay tenement;—Though *to die*, will be rather, *to become* what we *never were*, then ceasing *to be* what *we are*; yet we feel a reluctance to death, as our very consciousness seems reflected on us, by the scenes that we must quit, and the objects that we must resign. Constructed as our minds are, taking their peculiar modes of thought and complexion, from our material frames, Death presents itself to our view, as the termination of that which now contributes to our enjoyment, excites our interest, and stimulates our activity. Our senses describe a circle around

us, of which our own individuality, forms as it were the center; of OUR BEING abstractedly considered, we know little or nothing;—the most we know of it, is derived from the relations we sustain; we, in a manner identify ourselves, with the objects of perception enjoyed; for us, the music of the Grove breathes, the flowers of Spring blossom, the lights of Heaven shine: ALL, ALL, are ours; we have organs accommodated to their perception, and commanding their enjoyment; but what will they be to us, when Death takes place? When all that charms the listening ear, or presents such an assemblage of beauties to the eye, will be apparently veiled, lost, extinguished for ever? He had deeply read human nature, whose pathetic enquiry ran thus—

> "For who to dumb forgetfulness, a prey,
> This pleasing, anxious being e'er resign'd,
> Left the warm precincts of the cheerful day,
> Nor cast one longing, ling'ring look behind?"

Often has Mr. Field acknowledged to his friend, that he felt cleaving to life, though resigned to death; and he has frequently expressed, a degree of astonishment, that aged people should not more easily form realizing views of dissolution. This however, is not perhaps to be expected from the natural feelings of the mind; for our feelings are regulated by experience; now all that an aged person has experienced, is life: he has only witnessed the machinery of his frame, as acting; the

stream of his mortal existence, as flowing; unless when visited by severe illness, he anticipates the character of to-morrow, from the complexion of to day: Reason and Revelation must concur in removing the delusion, which continued life occasions; and in teaching an aged person, to hold converse with a dying hour.

But whatever may be the delusion by whose influence, Age overlooks the grave, and forgets that the end of all things is at hand, the old man gives evident proof to others, of his own mortality: he expires in detail, his external functions gradually cease, and his sensitive powers are marked by increasing weakness. Thus it was with the subject of this narrative, but there was never, that prostration of intellect, and that extreme bodily debility, which are most commonly, the attendants on protracted existence. He read, till the very close of life, many hours in the day, sleeping a little at intervals; but he felt very sensibly the loss of memory, and his usual remark when speaking of a book was, "*I can recollect nothing.*" After the death of his Daughter, who resided with him, he necessarily spent many solitary hours, but he never found solitude unpleasant, and he was often heard singing one of the songs of Zion: putting as it were that blood bought harp in tune, whose strings were soon to be struck before the throne of God and of the Lamb.

After the death of Miss Field, which he felt as a man, but contemplated with the faith and hope of a Christian, on his only surviving Daughter, Mrs. F., the task wholly devolved, (though never felt as a task) to support and comfort her aged Parent. Circumstances were so providentially ordered, that by making proper arrangements, she was enabled without infringing on her own domestic engagements, and neglecting the sacred duties of home, to spend a considerable portion of time with him, whose days were numbered, and the continued enjoyment of whose society, became every hour more precarious. And it is, most pleasing to reflect, that all the offices which duty could perform, and all the attentions which affection could suggest, attended the closing years of his pilgrimage.

For many years before his death, he was afflicted with the gout ; when first visited with this complaint, some one informed the eminent Doctor Pulteney, of the circumstance, who exclaimed, "*What business has a man, of Mr. Field's temperate habits, with the gout ?*" Alas ! the gout had much to do with him, but he bore its sufferings with meekness and patience. Whilst its paroxysms were regular, and confined to the extremities of the body, its fits seemed to terminate in renovated health : but at length it degenerated, into those wandering gouty affections, which took the whole system for their range, and seized occasionally on

the vital parts. Many severe attacks of this kind, gave alarm, but recovery had been so frequently unexpected, that when his last brief illness, hurried this venerable man to the grave, his friends in general, were unapprehensive of so speedy a dissolution.

On the last Sabbath in December, 1820, he paid his final visit to the house of God; though the morning was extremely cold, yet his attendance was given to the Sanctuary: he returned home cold and shivering, nature began to sink, and he went before his accustomed hour, to that bed, from whence he was to arise no more.

On the subject of a death bed experience, the Writer feels himself concerned, to make the following remark; there is, he apprehends, among those who are pious, a mistake, generally prevalent, relative to what will be the feelings of aged Christians, in the hour of dissolution. It is often confidently anticipated, that their dying hour must be marked, by the manifestation of all that contributes, *to display* their triumph over their last enemy. Not content with having sufficient proof, that they are more than conquerors, we are ready to doubt whether there is any conquest obtained, till we see the triumphal procession. But how can we reasonably expect, that when every faculty and every power fail, there will be the same energy of

feeling, and the same expansion of thought, on the subject of religion, though to every thing besides, the mind is almost a blank, and sensation itself, is nearly lost? If the principles of religion preserve their character, if their identity can be still traced, if a good hope through grace remain unimpaired—it is all that we ought to look for.—The case is widely different with persons who are cut down in their prime, by diseases, which do not materially impair the mental faculties; they have a fairer opportunity and more adequate means, for discovering what the power of religion can accomplish in the dying hour. So far as the Writer's observation has gone, he has found the death of aged Saints, rather distinguished by humble trust, than extatic joys.

During Mr. Field's last illness, his general tone of conversation, was eminently marked by the same pious and diffident sentiments, he had evinced through life. When once his Grandchildren visited him, looking on them with earnestness and affection, he said, after replying to their inquiries about his health, "*Young People, I exhort you to work,* "*whilst it is called to day, because the night of death* "*cometh, in which no man can work.*"

The observant eye, the sympathising heart, and the unwearied hand of filial tenderness, did all that could be done, when he was laid on the bed of lan-

guishing, and thought all too little, and so indeed it was, in requital of such a Father's conduct.

He was occasionally restless, and sometimes delirious, but his delirium seemed as a pleasant dream, presenting irregular and yet lovely associations. "*What sweet little infant is that,*" he asked, *which I see there ?—how it smiles !*

In those interviews the Writer had with his venerable friend, he was perfectly collected ; his language was that of humble dependance, upon the Grace and Mercy of God, through our Lord Jesus Christ. It was observed, in allusion to his weak state, "*We hope my dear Sir, that the Lord will raise you up this time also, and that you will be still spared to us, but a parting time, must come.*" '*Never mind that,*' replied he *if we do but meet again.*" After a short pause he said, "*I have been thinking that the Christian must undergo two great changes, one when he is converted to God, and the other when he lays aside, the body of sin and death.*"

The night preceding his death, he appeared somewhat better, when his Daughter left him, but he soon after became uneasy and restless. On his Nurse going to him, in the morning about four o' clock, and kneeling down by his bedside, to support him, when he was endeavouring to raise himself, she heard him repeat very distinctly, the following

hymn, with some detached verses.

"O for an overcoming faith
To cheer my dying hours,
To triumph o'er the monster death,
And all his frightful pow'rs !

Joyful, with all the strength I have,
My quiv'ring lips should sing,
Where is thy boasted vict'ry grave ?
And where the monster's sting.

If sin be pardon'd, I'm secure ;
Death hath no sting beside:
The law gives sin its damning power ;
But Christ my ransom dy'd.

Now to the God of victory,
Immortal thanks be paid,
Who makes us conqu'rors while we die,
Through Christ our living head."

—o—

"AND must this body die,
This mortal frame decay ?
And must these active limbs of mine
Lie mould'ring in the clay ?

Corruption, earth, and worms,
Shall but refine this flesh,
Till my triumphant spirit comes
To put it on afresh.

—o—

"DEATH ! 'tis a melancholy day
To those that have no God,
When the poor soul is forc'd away,
To seek her last abode.

"*But*, observed his attendant, *it is not a melancholy*

day, to you Sir, you are well prepared for heaven." He answered, "*My friends think so, and* I HOPE THAT IT IS SO." He then dropt his head, breathed one gentle sigh, and sunk without a struggle, into the arms of death.

Such was the end of this good Man, whose life was distinguished by the love and practise of the Gospel of Christ.

It was intended, that there should be, what is called a close funeral, as it was concluded, that this would better suit the disposition of Mr. Field; and that if he had given any directions on the subject, it would have been, that the circumstance of his interment, should be as unostentatious as possible. But the public feeling in that Society, of which he had been so many years, the revered Pastor, became too strong to be repressed; every person demanded an opportunity, to pay the last tribute of respect, to one so much endeared. That feeling was indulged, and though at the time of the funeral, the rain poured in torrents, a large multitude followed in the train of mourners; and in that train were found, not only the Members of his own Society, but great numbers of the Established Church. Almost every shop was shut, as the solemn procession passed; in the Church, that beautiful ode, "the dying Christian to his Soul," was sung with appropriate effect, and the funeral

Service, was most impressively read, by the Rev. C. J. Hoare.

The preceding brief narrative is left for others, to form their estimate of what the World and the Church have lost, in the removal of Mr. Field: if indeed he was personally known, the statement itself will be unnecessary: but the Writer feels that it would be presumption for him, to offer his judgement on a character, which he can only survey with emotions of tenderness and respect: he feels that such an attempt would not only be superfluous, but supercilious: No, he is himself more inclined, to bewail the loss which he and others have sustained, than formally to state, the excellencies his invaluable friend possessed.—My Father! My Father! THE CHARIOT OF ISRAEL, AND THE HORSEMEN THEREOF.

FINIS.

THE CHARIOT OF ISRAEL, AND THE HORSEMEN THEREOF.

THE PIOUS REMEMBRANCE OF DECEASED PASTORS URGED:

BEING THE SUBSTANCE OF

A

FUNERAL SERMON,

FOR THE

REV. H. FIELD;

BY

RICHARD KEYNES.

BE NOT SLOTHFUL, BUT FOLLOWERS OF THEM, WHO THROUGH FAITH AND PATIENCE, INHERIT THE PROMISES.

Blandford;
PRINTED AND SOLD BY T. OAKLEY.

A

SERMON.

Heb. xiii. 7. 8.

Remember your rulers, * who have spoken unto you, the word of God; whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation; Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever.

As we are eminently raised, above the brute creation, by our intellectual powers, so these powers will be most distinguished, by the improvement of past events; or, in making, a due provision for future contingencies. Let all, my brethren, that concerns you, be contracted, within the narrow circle of the present hour and the passing day, and the dignity of your nature, is lost. Slight are the advantages, which Man then retains, above inferior animals; and in many points of sagacity and strength, he is confessedly unequal to them. It is, the improved recollection of the past; it is, the correct anticipation of the future; which elevates the creature of a day, and gives to human nature, its

* There is a slight verbal alteration of the received version, but it does not affect the sense of the passage, and it is a literal translation of Μνημονεύετε τῶν ἡγουμένων ὑμῶν.

peculiar and dignifying properties. A mortal being, exhibits some traces of his divine origin, when by the exercise of his internal powers, he makes, the past return; and acts, as though the future, were present. Both Memory and Hope, are designed by the GREAT AUTHOR of our existence, to aid us, in the pursuit of HONOUR, GLORY, and IMMORTALITY. Which of these, is more influential on the Christian, it would be difficult to determine; but, in the certainty and accuracy of its delineations, Memory, has the decided superiority. It must, in truth, impart to hope itself, that peculiar form and character it possesses, for on what ground can we venture to hope for the future, unless from what we know of the past. A future heaven, I dare not expect, unless my past experience, warrant the expectation.

While the hallowed recollection of the past, has a most important bearing, on our state and circumstances, as moral agents and accountable creatures; there is something in it, peculiarly gratifying, to the best feelings of our nature. Life seems renewed, and time itself restored, as we retrace, that chequered path, in all its windings and varieties, through which Divine Providence has conducted us. When thus engaged, we are raised above the laws of matter, and of motion, the principle of immortality is itself at work; and the power of a self determining soul is engaged, in forming its own world of thought and feeling. Yes, my brethren, the distinction

between the past and the present, is then lost:—all is present—that ever was so, in the same degree that memory is able to recall it. I remember to have seen in a large Gothic Hall, a globular mirror, appended to its ceiling, on which was reflected, every object, that the room contained: such is the human mind, with however this difference, that it does not only receive, at the passing moment, the objects, presenting themselves; but, retains them, in proportion, to the sense it has of their importance. I feel thankful, that in affliction and anxiety, I have looked upon this internal mirror, and I have seen the softened images of departed friends; with them, I have again enjoyed social converse, and it has been, as though no separation had taken place.

But my Christian Friends, it is with the remembrance of the pious dead, to whom we have sustained some endearing relation, that our best affections are blended, and our highest gratifications experienced. We catch by the very recollection of them, a gleam of that immortality they enjoy; and all that we remember, of the pious dispositions, they exercised, and the holy course, they pursued, becomes to us, a sacred assurance, of the glory, they now possess; and the blessedness, they now realise. But especially, should such a remembrance prove sanctifying to the heart, that bears it; and give a more exalted character, to the life of him, who is its subject. Yes, my brethren, such a remembrance,

should be powerfully influential : thus the present age would, through the Divine Blessing, reflect the graces and virtues of the past ; and we should find in our own persons, the resurrection of departed worth and excellency.

A friend, an inestimable friend, of many whom I address ; whose "hoary head was a crown of glory, being found in the way of righteousness," has gone the way of all flesh. His mortal part sleeps in Jesus ; and we feel, no painful anxiety, about that better part, over which death had no power. With a melancholy feeling, yet not devoid of pleasurable sensations, do I engage in this last act of filial duty, in relation to one, who was indeed, a father in Israel ; but especially recognised in that character, by the humble individual, now addressing you. The flowery wreath of panegyric, his memory does not need ; nor should I, be capable of twining it—No, my brethren, we meet not to eulogise our deceased friend, but, in dependance upon God, to aim at self improvement. I have selected the passage, just read as our text, because I feel persuaded, that the best tribute, we can pay, to the memory of our deceased friend, will be to follow him, as he followed Christ.

Allow me to suggest the following topics, from that part of Divine Truth, which we have chosen, on this occasion, for your serious consideration.

I. A PARTICULAR INJUNCTION.—"*Remember them that were your Rulers, who have spoken unto you, the word of God.*"

II. THE END, TO BE ANSWERED, BY SUCH A REMEMBRANCE—"*Whose faith follow.*"

III. THE MOTIVE, FOR OUR IMITATION, OF DEPARTED SAINTS—"*Considering the end of their conversation.*"

IV. A POWERFUL CONSOLATION, SUGGESTED TO THOSE, WHO HAVE SUSTAINED BEREAVING DISPENSATIONS OF PROVIDENCE—"*Jesus Christ, the same, yesterday, to day, and for ever.*"

I. A PARTICULAR INJUNCTION—"*Remember them, that were your Rulers; who have spoken unto you, the word of God.*"

A Pastor is not a menial servant; but, a Minister invested with authority:—He is, a RULER. With what meekness, gentleness, and kindness, our deceased friend, discharged the functions of this office, it is unnecessary, for me to state. Like the Apostle, to the Gentiles, "He gave not offence, in any thing, that the Ministry might not be blamed." We are called upon, to *remember him*, but how could we forget such a man? How could we draw, the veil of oblivion, over *all* that he was? This would argue, a strange moral insensibility; and discover,

that however valuable his labours, we had derived no profit from them. Yes, my friends, you will remember, and long remember, that venerable man, who, bending under the pressure, of more than four score years, entered the house of God, as one, that must soon put off his mortal tabernacle, and leave this earthly sanctuary. It was here, that he, who seemed to be, as it were, the inhabitant of another world, lingered. Yes, you will, you must remember him:—You will think of him, in the courts of the Lord's house, and at that sacred table, where he was found, a willing and delighted guest.

But my friends, how concerned should we feel, that our remembrance, may be practical?—The unbelieving Jews, garnished the tombs of the Prophets, but disregarded their writings: superstition, adored the relics of Martyrs, but renounced their spirit. Let us not merely call to mind, the bodily frame, the sensible image, of our deceased friend; but let us rather strive, to remember, what he was, according to the spirit. REMEMBER THE CHRISTIAN; REMEMBER THE PASTOR; and it will be, of little importance, if the material form, should fade upon the mind.

1. Remember, the GOSPEL PRINCIPLES, which for a period of nearly seventy years, he avowed, as being essentially necessary, for giving to life, its usefulness; and, to a dying hour, its comfort and its

triumph. These were inculcated by his preaching, and exemplified in his life. His belief in them, was not merely a notional assent, but faith unfeigned. Religious principles and opinions are, my Brethren, very different things. A mere opinionative attachment, to truths of the highest order, may be found in persons sustaining the ministerial character, who do but coldly speculate, on Christian Doctrines; and, whose creed is only valuable, as the symbol of that party, to which, they have attached themselves. It forms a watch word, it frames a shibboleth, but, has nothing to do with the heart. The evangelical system itself, with such men, is but as a wintry moon beam, that gilds a freezing wreath of snow. Far different however, is the state of those, whom the Lord Jesus, has counted faithful, by putting them into the ministry. They will have something more, than a set of notions floating in the mind; their religion, will consist of principles, rooted in the heart, and substantially diffused, through every faculty of the soul. Such was the religion, of your deceased Pastor. "He took heed both to himself, and to his doctrine;" "he continued, in the truth as it is in Jesus," and in so doing, we,—ascribing all to the praise and glory of Divine Grace—say, without hesitation, "that he saved himself:"—Oh! may it be hereafter proved, that "he has saved many, *very many*, of those that heard him." Remember, my brethren, how often, and how clearly he stated, that humbling truth, the entire depravity of human

nature; and, as essentially connected with it, the utter impossibility of your being justified, by your own righteousness, which is of the law. With what sacred pleasure, did he speak, of that Divine Redeemer, "who gave himself, a ransom for us all." "Who died for our sins, and rose again for our justification." Yes, however faint and tremulous his voice, it seemed to gather strength, when declaring, "Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sins of the world." And how strongly did he inculcate, the absolute necessity of a change of heart, "that we might be made meet, to be partakers, of the inheritance of the saints in light." Here we have, my Christian friends, the distinctive features of a mind, capaciously informed, concerning the mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven; and of a heart, that most cordially embraced them. You have indeed, but the outlines, yet these I trust, your own recollection will be capable of filling up, as you ponder them, over in your mind. Oh! remember these *are* the principles, which he steadily, uniformly, consistently maintained.

2. Remember too, my brethren, the *Christian Temper*, that your deceased Pastor evinced. If ever there was a humble, unassuming servant of Christ, he was one. In him we could trace much of the meekness of Moses, combined with the benevolence of the beloved Disciple. A little incident will shew his disposition. Well do I remember, ah! I hope

it will never be erased from my heart, that the evening before my ordination, as Co-Pastor with him—he prayed thus—"*May thine aged Servant,* "*O Lord, retire, piously retire into the shade, and* "*thy young Servant, shine in the Church of God with* "*far brighter lustre.*" But, we are thankful his labours, were continued after this prayer, for sixteen years; and if I might presume on the epithet he used, as applicable to myself—we shone together: my slender ray of Divine knowledge, was mixed with his purer and stronger beams. The circumstance I have mentioned, marks the true character, of the temper, of this man of God, it was uniformly self-denying, yet considerate, and kind to others. Angry passions, were excluded from his bosom, malevolent feelings, never discomposed the tranquillity of his mind. He appeared not only to possess a holy serenity himself; but to have the enviable talent, of communicating his own calm and placid spirit, to the society, in which he moved. In him, the Christian temper seemed to be, the natural bias of his mind: it had all the ascendancy of that long formed habit, which is as a second nature. The praise of this, and every other excellency he possessed, is not to be attributed to himself: no, the grace of God made him, what he was, and less than the grace of God, would have been insufficient, to produce such effects. All glory be ascribed to Him, who begun, carried on, and at length, completed his own work.

3. Remember likewise, that *exemplary course of life*, he pursued. A freedom from grosser vices, is no commendation to one, whose official character could not be retained, were they indulged. His situation in life forbids them : his own credit, demands an exemption from them : motives of a secular cast, are sufficient to ensure their exclusion. But often in the man, and even in the minister, whose conduct is scrupulously exact, we find a tongue of slander, and a lip of scorn. Our venerable friend, had on the contrary, the law of kindness on his lips. Before this large assembly, I make a fearless appeal to those, who *knew the man, and his communication*—Did you ever know an instance, of his wounding the heart of a friend, by unkindness, or, of his defaming the character that he should have protected ? No—laying his hand upon his heart, he could join in the declaration of the Apostle—"Ye are witnesses, and God also, how holily, and justly, and unblameably, we behaved ourselves, among you that believe. As you know, how we exhorted, and comforted, and charged every one of you, as a Father doth his Children. That ye should walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto his Kingdom."

These, my Christian Friends, are the points, on which I trust, you will find reflection, enabling you largely to amplify : and that the *Gospel Principles*, your deceased Pastor, consistently avowed ; the

Christian Temper, he uniformly evinced; and the *Exemplary course of life*, he constantly pursued, will not only be gratefully, but practically, remembered.

We would further remind you, that he, whose life was his best sermon, has spoken unto you the word of God. The SUBSTANCE of his preaching, has been already stated, its MODE may be briefly noticed.

1. Remember with *what affection*, he spoke to you, the word of God. Strong impassioned language, he was not indeed, generally accustomed to employ, for he had one of the mildest spirits, that ever animated a human form; and every thing, that he said and did, partook of its complexion. His preaching, resembled a smooth, transparent stream, which always reflected, "those exceeding great, and precious promises," that like the stars in the firmament, decorate the Christian's heaven, and point out the way to it. What, if the stream of holy truth, flowing from his venerable lips, never swelled into the torrent's roar, it never sunk into the noisy brook, or degenerated into the noxious marsh. He had a manner peculiarly his own, and there was such a discovery of affection, in the good old man, towards his hearers, that gave a powerful effect to his pulpit addresses. When he closed his discourse, and he generally concluded, by an affectionate wish, or rather, a fervent prayer, for

our spiritual benefit—Oh ! who could hear unmoved, his faltering voice, or look, without a melting heart, on the tear, trembling in that eye lid, so soon to close for ever.

2. And he preached to us, with *fidelity* too. He did not shun to declare the whole counsel of God. Oh ! my hearers, our blood, will be upon our own heads, the destruction of our souls, will be chargeable on ourselves—if we live without God and Christ in the world. Allow me, for a moment, to suspend my statement, of him, that I may address you. For his faithfulness in preaching the word of God, leaves us much to answer for. I am anxious, that in you, and myself, there should be an improvement, corresponding to the privilege, with which we have been favoured.

Ye AGED, who must soon follow your deceased Pastor to the tomb, YOU, who must soon be confronted with him, before the bar of God; will he meet you there, as the crown of his joy, and rejoicing in the Lord, or, to be himself, a swift witness against you? Your time is short, perhaps very short: I entreat you, by the mercies of God, I implore you, by the grave, that has received your best friend, and will soon open for you—to attend to your deceased Pastor's exhortations. To consider Religion, as "the one thing needful, and, to give all diligence, to make your calling and election sure."

You, who are engaged, in the *active concerns of the present state*, let not these divert you, from that serious attention, you should give to those things, which relate, to your everlasting peace. "Seek first," that is principally, " the Kingdom of God, and his righteousness." "Be as servants, that wait, for the coming of their Lord, who have their loins girded, and their lights burning." " Watch ye, for ye know not when the master of the house cometh ; at even, or at midnight, or at cock crowing, or in the morning. Lest, coming suddenly, he find you sleeping. And what I say unto you, I say unto all, watch."

And *you*, my dear *young Friends*, the rising hope of our ministry—shall I find, that though I have lost a Father, by whose fervent supplications, and kind counsels, my hands were upheld, I have to rejoice, in my children, who are walking in the truth ?—Believe me, the tears of sorrow, I shed over his grave, would be converted into tears of joy, if I might venture to hope, that the remembrance, of your deceased Pastor, would contribute to impress the word of God, which is preached to you, on your hearts.

We are naturally led, in the—

SECOND PLACE—To notice, *that valuable end, which should be answered, by the remembrance, of your deceased Pastor*—" WHOSE FAITH, FOLLOW."

This exhortation, presents to our view, that principle, which forms the basis, of the Christian Character; which constitutes the originating cause, the germ, of all those excellent and lovely qualities, it unfolds. For this reason, the Apostle, when he includes and comprehends the whole of Christian Experience and Practice, directs us to follow, or *imitate*, the FAITH of departed Saints. Not that there is to be, an unrestricted, an unqualified imitation, of those, who were the excellent of the earth: they had their errors and infirmities, their spots and blemishes. The example of Christ, forms the only absolute model, for our imitation: and *they* are only to be followed, as they followed HIM. It is, in this limited and restricted sense, that we exhort you, to imitate the faith, of your deceased Pastor.

1. Strive after, that *simple reliance*, which he placed, on what Christ did, and suffered, for the guilty Children of Men. My Brethren, it is only those, who believe in Him, and rely solely and entirely, on his atoning blood, and justifying righteousness, that can have peace with God. Never, never, will you be accepted *of* God, unless you are accepted *in* Christ. May you, be made sensible of your guilt, and disposed "to fly for refuge, to the hope, set before you, in the Gospel." "*Christ is my only hope*"—were nearly the last words, I heard your deceased Pastor utter.

2. Exercise a *Godly Jealousy*, over your *faith*, as that pious man, was accustomed to do. If indeed, I could blame aught in his faith, it was this, that a constitutional timidity, too much prevailed, and that though "he knew in whom he had believed"—yet his too great diffidence, frequently prevented his full enjoyment, of the Consolations of the Gospel: but we may have perhaps, an error, of a more dangerous kind, our error may be that of presumption. It would become us, to examine closely and scrupulously, that cold assent, which some of us have, I fear, contented ourselves, with giving, to Divine Truth. Close inspection would prove, that from *such a faith*, we had every thing to fear, but nothing to hope. A conviction of its deficiency, would be productive of fervent prayer to Him, from whom "every good and perfect gift proceeds," for that faith, which is peculiarly the gift of God. Let not your faith proceed unquestioned, when that of this venerable Saint, was tried every day. Oh! let us examine ourselves, "whether we are in the faith."

3. Imitate his Faith, by endeavouring to keep your own, in *constant and vigorous exercise*. The Christian is, "to live by faith:" this forms the vital principle of his religion; it is the life, of his life; and the soul, of his soul. All other graces, depend upon this; and are indeed, in some respects, but modifications of it. As it is one and the same principle of natural vitality, that sees in the eye, labours

by the hand, and walks with the feet; thus faith, must give to devotion, its wing; to repentance, its tear; and to every act of duty, its power. You will need this grace, whether you have to do, or to bear, the will of God. In seasons of distress, its worth will be incalculable, for it will become, "the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen." Our venerable Friend, had a large share of calamity. Dark were the clouds, that rested on his habitation, and deep the gloom, that frequently pervaded his domestic circle; day after day, passed in the same cheerless uniformity: but his faith, like an evergreen, appeared more beautiful, from the wintry desolations, by which, it was encircled. Without faith, we shall never bear our afflictions, with patience; or improve them, to the glory of God.

4. Imitate his faith, as *to the purity of its operations.* See, that you believe "with the heart unto righteousness." Vain and foolish, are all our pretensions to faith, if suitable fruits and effects, are not produced. "What doth it profit, my brethren, though "a man say he hath faith, and have not works? "Can faith save him? If a brother or sister be "naked, and destitute of daily food, and one of you "say unto them, Depart in peace, be you warmed "and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not "those things which are needful for the body; what "doth it profit? Even so faith, if it hath not works,

"is dead, being alone. Yea, a man may say thou "hast faith, and I have works; shew me thy faith "without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith "by my works. Thou believest that there is one "God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and "tremble. But wilt thou know, O vain man, that "faith without works is dead."

So let our lips, and *lives* express,
The holy Gospel, we profess;
So let our works and virtues shine,
To prove the Doctrine, all Divine.

Such is the faith of a Christian—and my brethren, what self denial—what circumspection, in duty—what improvement of the means of grace—what devotedness, to the Redeemer—what dependance upon the Holy Spirit, for his gracious aid, does a life of faith require? Without these accompaniments, it is but trifling with ourselves, to suppose, that we shall live by faith. But surely, as this course, is not without its difficulties, so neither shall it be destitute of its reward. "Verily, there is a reward for the righteous, there is a God that judgeth in the earth."

This leads us to consider, in the—

THIRD PLACE—THE MOTIVE ADVANCED, TO STIMULATE OUR IMITATION OF DEPARTED SAINTS. "*Whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation.*"

Conversation, is a scriptural term, of very general and extensive import, denoting the whole course of human life. The Apostle, seems anticipating that objection, which is often made, to a life of faith and holiness, namely, the difficulties it presents. But consider, he appears saying, not only the toils, it involves, but the reward, it ensures. It is, my brethren, the end that crowns all. Trade and commerce would languish, the Ocean would never be crossed, if labours and difficulties, were only taken into the account. "*A Peerage, or Westminster Abbey,*" was the sentiment of the Hero, of the Nile. If to moulder in the dust, under a splendid Mausoleum, could inspire such ardour, what ought the Christian to feel, when he contemplates, "that inheritance, which is incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away." How powerfully, should his mind be excited, when he hears his Divine Lord, saying, "To HIM that overcometh, I will give to sit with me, on my throne; even as I overcame, and am set down, with my Father, on his throne." If any consideration, can add, to the impulse, such a promise gives, it is, its actual fulfilment, in the transition of those persons, to a state of glory, whom we have seen, languishing on a bed of pain, subject to the same spiritual infirmities, with ourselves. Yes; Happy, Glorified Spirits—your prayers—your tears—your doubts, your sorrows—have found their termination, in the rest, that remaineth, for the people of God:

and we feel encouraged and animated, by considering the end of your conversation.

1. Consider the end of their conversation—*They rest from their labours.* The Traveller is glad to have reached his journey's end, and the labourer, after he has toiled through a summer's day, sinks into sweet repose. Thus the Christian, after having wrestled with temptation, engaged in his master's work, and reached the close of his pilgrimage, obtains a rest, that shall never be diminished, or even interrupted. Our deceased friend, was once the subject of athritic pains, and that to a great degree; he endured them, without a murmur, but still, it was suffering. His mind frequently laboured under the influence, of doubts and fears, that betrayed weakness and imperfection. At different periods of life, he had numerous afflictive visitations, and doubtless, experienced those spiritual conflicts, from which, no Christian is exempt. But all these, are now ended—the warrior, is crowned; the traveller, has reached his home; the saint has closed, his pilgrimage. All, that he deplored, all that gave him annoyance, all that inflicted pain, he escaped, when his spirit departed, with that gentle sigh. The encumbering load of flesh, he laid aside, without a struggle, as a person when going to rest, disrobes himself of his garments: "he received, but" assuredly—"did not suffer, death's tremendous blow." And now, he rests, but it is not the

rest of inactivity; it is not, such a rest, as the body, worn out with toil and labour, demands—No, the rest of the soul, is of a very different kind:—we owe the term, to the poverty of human language, in reference to spiritual things: and it is not an unmeaning one, as it signifies the removal of all that is painful; but, it has this great deficiency, it fails to convey the idea, of absolute and positive enjoyment. Oh! it is not the rest of a sleeping animal, it is not the rest of a motionless stone—but it is, the rest of a living soul, that has reached God, as its centre, and finds, in the beatific vision, an infinite degree of actual blessedness, connected with undisturbed repose.

2. Consider the end of their conversation, *for their mortal course, has terminated in a better; that is, in a heavenly country.* I cannot more clearly convey my ideas, on this subject, than by quoting, those well known lines, which many a saint, in our vale of tears, taking his harp from the willows, and forgetting his sorrows, has sung;

"There is, a land of pure delight,
Where Saints immortal, reign;
Infinite day, excludes the night,
And pleasures, banish pain."

Yes, our pious friends, who have departed from the present state, breathe its vital air, enjoy its cloudless sky, and are blessed with its holy society.

"The ransomed of the Lord, have come to Zion, with songs, and everlasting joy, upon their heads." There is no part, of the word of God, which I recollect our deceased friend, to have read so frequently, in the public worship of God, as the 12th Chapter of the Hebrews,—and he always seemed to read the following part of it, in a peculiarly emphatical manner, "But ye are come unto mount Sion, and "unto the city of the living God, the heavenly "Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of "angels." Believers, in the present state, notwithstanding all their imperfections, have come to these delightful objects; but, it is merely as those, who stand waiting, at the door of a palace, or just enter the porch of a temple, but are suffered to go, no farther. To departed Saints, every apartment in this palace, is opened, it is their own residence: they are admitted into this temple,—yea, they have become pillars in the house of God, and shall go out, no more, for ever. "They rest not, day nor night, crying, HOLY, HOLY, HOLY." Whatever is included, by the inheritance, of the saints in light, they possess, and enjoy.

3. Consider the end of their conversation, *for they have entered, into the joy of their Lord.* The scale of pleasurable feelings, enjoyed by man, could it be formed, would almost admit, of an infinite number of degrees. And how much superior, those of the man of knowledge and science, to that of a

mere sensualist. And how much nobler still, those of the people of God, "whose fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son, Jesus Christ." But there is something, which casts into the shade, all the pleasure, to be derived, from the acquisitions, of literature and science; something, that as far exceeds, the enjoyment of religion itself, in this imperfect state, as the Sun of nature does, the morning star, that ushers in his bright orb, but is soon lost, in the effulgence of his rays. The shadows, which encompassed them, in their mortal state, are scattered, and Believers, have entered, into that presence, "where there is fulness of joy, and pleasures for evermore." Yes, they have entered, "into the joy of their Lord:" they are represented, as partakers of the same blessedness, with the Divinity: "that which is sufficient for a God, is it not adequate for a worm?"

It appears to me, my Christian Friends, that from our reflections this evening, two conclusions, are fairly deducible; the first is, to rest satisfied, concerning our pious friends, who have departed, from the present state; for they are far happier, than we could have made them.—The second is, to be ourselves, excited, to pursue the same course they trod, and to make it our great concern, "to be stedfast, immoveable, and always abounding in the work of the Lord; forasmuch as we know, that our labour will not be in vain, in the Lord." But we

want something more, sorrow partakes of selfishness; we feel most acutely in the hour of bereavement, our own loss. God, in his word, accommodates himself, to the weakness and imperfection of man. You have sustained a great loss, and there is, in the FOURTH PLACE—

A POWERFUL TOPIC, OF CONSOLATION, SUGGESTED. "*Jesus Christ, the same, yesterday, and to day, and for ever.*" Jesus Christ, is the same, in *the power of his truth.* Accompanied by his Holy Spirit, it can in every age, convert the sinner, from the error of his ways; and is able, to build up his own people, and to give them, an inheritance, among those who are sanctified. Open that sacred book, which was to your deceased Pastor, the food of his soul, the light of his mind, the joy of his existence—there are the same doctrines, to instruct you; the same precepts, to guide you; the same promises, to bless you. Ministers may die, but the Bible, like its Divine Author, has the "power of an endless life." Take it, as your best treasure; regard it, as your most valuable friend; listen to its directions, as your infallible counsellor. 'When thou goest, it 'shall lead thee; when thou sleepest, it shall keep 'thee; when thou awakest, it shall talk with thee.'

2. Jesus Christ, is *the same, in the sufficiency of his Grace.* To the bereaved family, of our deceased friend, this should prove, a most consolatory

thought. How much has he borne you, on his heart, in prayer : how many petitions has he offered, on your behalf. For every member, if I may so speak, he has cleared the avenues to the throne of Grace. But this is a consideration, which while, it belongs, *peculiarly*, to the members of his family, extends to *us all.* We were all interested in his prayers, and the grace, he implored for us, is attainable by us. That Divine influence, which rendered him, a humble, holy, consistent believer in Christ, will not be witheld from any of us, if we seek it diligently, " and search for it, as for hid treasures." It is but for us to ask, and have. "Hitherto, said Christ to his disciples, ye have asked nothing in my name, ask and receive, that your joy may be full." "God is able to make all Grace, abound towards you :" supporting grace in trial, delivering grace in temptation, and triumphant grace in a dying hour. Go, my fellow Christian, to the Lord Jesus, in whom it hath pleased the Father, " all fulness should dwell," and " out of his fulness, you shall receive, and grace for grace."

3. Jesus Christ is the same, *in the riches of his consolation.*—He gives his Spirit to Mankind, under the appellation of the *Comforter.* Seek for the Holy Ghost, to apply *his* consolations, to your hearts ; enabling you, to view your sins, as pardoned ; your persons, as accepted ; and your title to heavenly blessedness, as obtained, by that pre-

cious blood shedding, which Calvary witnessed. Then you will "glory in tribulation also, knowing, "that tribulation, worketh patience; and patience, "experience, and experience, hope; and hope "maketh not ashamed, because the love of God, "is shed abroad in our hearts, by the Holy Ghost, "which is given unto us." As you drink into those consolations, Christ has provided for his people, your mind will be tranquillized, and your sorrow, will abate:—at last, all that you have left of affliction, will be found a cordial draught, of which, hope, is the chief ingredient.—

(Some Account was here given, of the Life of Mr. FIELD, but the necessity of its insertion in this place, is superseded, by the Biographical Sketch, which precedes this Sermon.)

In closing my discourse, I can hardly suppress the emotions, I feel, on looking round this crowded auditory. I cannot but observe, that your appearance here, clearly indicates, the respect you felt, for my deceased Friend; and the sense, you entertain, of the excellencies, that were manifested by his life and conversation. Though many, very many of you, worshipped God, in a different mode from him—yet, I am sure you will readily acknowledge, that there is no denomination of Christians, who would not feel themselves honoured, by claiming such a member. He has entered that world, where

sects and parties, are unknown : where Prejudice and Bigotry obtain no entrance. May we follow him, to those blessed abodes, and if through the imperfection of human nature, we move towards the Zion that is above, in separate groups—keeping the same object in view, may we obtain, the same end, and be blessed with a perfect union in the heavenly world, though divided on earth. Even in this world, let us be under the influence of that charity, towards each other, "which believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things."

My dear Friends, the MEMBERS OF THIS CHURCH, AND CONGREGATION, it is difficult to say, whether yourselves, or the Individual addressing you, has sustained the heavier loss. We feel as children, who are fatherless. But when the mortal part, of a beloved parent, is consigned to the grave, what is the first care, of those who revere his memory ? Is it not to execute his dying instructions ? Would it not be esteemed a flagrant breach of filial duty, to neglect, what a parent had been inculcating for a considerable series of years ? God grant, that the respect and veneration, we feel for our deceased friend, may be directed into this channel ; that the substance of his preaching, may be remembered and improved ; and the force of his example, become powerfully influential, on our minds and hearts. For myself, I have to request, your sympathy and prayers—I cannot engage, to be *all* to

you, that *he was*, bnt I hope, that it is my earnest prayer, to be your faithful, devoted, and affectionate servant, in the Ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ. I rejoice in bearing an honourable testimony, to the kindness and respect, with which you treated your deceased Pastor; and I am sure, you will feel happy, in reflecting, that your conduct towards him, materially contributed, to encrease the comforts of his old age. Oh! may you meet him, in the world of Glory, there may, your mutual friendship be renewed, and sustain a more exalted character.

My dear and much respected Friends, united by the ties of nature, and I trust, of religion, to the venerable Saint, who has entered into rest: I feel myself overpowered, when attempting to address you. The loss you have sustained, none but yourselves, can appreciate: you knew his worth best: he was the violet blooming in the shade, distinguished by the richness of its fragrance, rather than by its colouring. This indeed, only serves to shew, the greatness of your bereavement; but you must remember, that your loss, is his gain: yea, that his loss, improved, will contribute, to your everlasting welfare. May the younger branches of his family, tread in the footsteps of their grandsire, and remember his dying exhortations—"to attend to religion, in early life," and join him hereafter, in the realms of everlasting bliss.

My brethren, time is short, and life uncertain: drawn out to its most extended period, it is but as "a watch in the night."—Often has our deceased Friend remarked, when he had lived more than four score years, "*all the past, seems but as a dream.*" SOON, will each one, whom I address, be numbered with the dead; SOON, will our eternal destiny, be irrevocably fixed; SOON, shall we either be singing, the praises of God, and the Lamb, or, dreadful alternative, banished from God, and from the glory of his power, for ever. Oh! may God enable us, "SO TO NUMBER OUR DAYS, AS TO APPLY OUR HEARTS UNTO WISDOM."

Finis.

THE

REV. M. BLAKE'S

Account of the Fire, which nearly consumed

BLANDFORD,

ON FRIDAY, JUNE THE 4th, 1731.

a ABOUT Two o'Clock in the *Afternoon*, a dismal cry of '*Fire!*' was heard in our Streets. The Inhabitants of the place, were all soon alarmed; some were called from their *business;* some, possibly, from their *pleasures;* some, perhaps, from their *cups:* however, every one was terribly surprised; though those one would hope, were in the best posture of mind to bear it, who were most *usefully or innocently* employed.

The Fire *first* kindled, on the outside of a Soap-boiler's house; occasioned, (as he conjectures,) by sparks that fell from a chimney, upon the Thatch. Some think differently; but all agree, that as to man, it was entirely *accidental*.—The House stood on a rising ground, where four Streets met, not far from the middle of the Town. Our three engines were soon brought out, and played, but to no purpose; for in little more than half an hour, they were either all burnt, or rendered unfit for service.

The *Wind*, which sat North-west, quickly carried the Fire into distant parts. Every corner of these four Streets, were presently in flames, that raged onward, with, and against the wind.—The Fire spread itself with that speed and fury, that every thing was soon devoured before it. Not a piece of timber but what was burnt to a

coal; the pewter in many houses, was not only melted, but reduced to ashes, by the fervent heat; our silver, in a literal sense, became *dross!* and if any made fine gold, their *confidence*, what a sad proof had they before their eyes, of their extreme folly, and its utter insufficiency, to make them *happy*.

Most persons (which was very observable) were at once seized with such a panic, that they gave up the Town for *lost*, quickly after the Fire broke out. *What ailed thee, O thou Fire, that thou wast so raging, that nothing could drive thee back?* Was it not because thou had'st thy commission from *above?* Surely we have seen, we have felt thy power, O Lord. Ah! who can stand before God, when once he is angry?

Before Seven o'Clock in the evening, (which was about *four* hours after the Fire began,) there was scarcely a house remained, but what, at least, was so much in flames, as to be past the reach of man, to preserve it; except some few, which Providence reserved, as in kindness to the owners, so in pity to them who had *none* left.

A neighbouring Hamlet, (at some considerable distance, and on the other side of the River, in the Parishes of St. Mary Blandford, and Brianston,) was almost totally consumed also, occasioned by some flakes of fire, carried from our burning habitations, and falling on their thatched buildings. Only three houses were saved in that Hamlet; the preservation of which, considering their situation, and the danger they were in, was surprising to all that then beheld them, or have since seen them.

Some few houses were remarkably preserved at the four quarters of the Town, which we would ascribe chiefly, to a good Providence; the Lord said, '*it is enough,*' *and the Fire was stayed!* Yet we would not forget, the kind and timely assistance, of such, as came from several parts of the *Country*, though they were indeed too late to attempt any service, for those who lived farther in the Town. A neighbouring Gentleman also, upon the first notice he had of our distress, came with the utmost speed, to afford us (according to his

wonted humanity) his best offices ; persuading some, hiring others, by presents or promised rewards, to help us. So that to his prudent management, direction, and care, it was much owing (under God) that the Fire ceased at two of the quarters. I would not pass by here, what we may presume, was no small reason in Providence, that there was not now an entire desolation ; I mean, the *fervent prayers* of many, that *God would stay his hand:* for at this time, almost every one, joined in one common and earnest *cry* unto Heaven, for *mercy*. God heard our cry, and his bowels were moved for us.

The Fire *ceased*, at the *east* part of the Town, where the last great Fire *began;* which was on the 9th of July, 1713. Then, almost all those houses which *now* escaped, were burnt down to the ground, to the further end of the Street. So that in so small a tract of time, as within the space of Twenty years, there is scarcely a house standing, which has not been rebuilt.

In the day of our great calamity, so *sudden* was the Fire, so *furious*, that many families had scarcely time to save any of their effects ; few had either time or help to save much. It is true, much *Household Goods*, as well as all sorts of *Merchandise*, were in the beginning, carried to distant houses, where it was then apprehended, they were safe from danger ; and much was brought out into the Streets, in hopes of timely assistance to carry it away. But alas ! they were soon sadly disappointed, and forced to leave to the devouring flames, what they had with so much pains and difficulty brought thither. Many were now thankful they could escape with their own *lives !* Or, however their hearts might be disposed, they scarcely had time to look back on what they had left behind them ! Which should teach us to "*labour not, for the meat that perisheth, but for that which endureth unto everlasting life.*"—I shall never forget the horror and affrightment, that appeared in every countenance, rendered still more frightful, by the labour and toil of the day. Many were scarce known, even to their *nearest neighbours*, so disfigured were they, with sorrow, smoke, and soot ! For alas ! "*The day of the Lord was come ; as a destruction from the Almighty, it came upon us.*"

And yet new surprises, and more bitter anguish, seize the hearts of many. In BLANDFORD, "*there was a voice heard, lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning:* many, like *Rachel* of old, *weeping for their Children, and would not be comforted, because* they thought *they were not.*" How many parents, with the most afflicting solicitude, were searching here and there, for their lost children! neither knowing where to find them, nor (for many hours together) so much as hoping ever to see them alive again! their *fears* strongly suggesting to them, that their little ones, were devoured in the torturing flames. Shocking thought! But it pleased the *Father of mercies*, by a singular direction of Providence, to take care of those poor wandering lambs, some flying for refuge to one place, some to another: insomuch that before the morning, they were *all* (for not one child perished in the flames) happily restored; not indeed, to their father's houses, (for houses they had none) but to the transporting sight, and most endearing embraces of their revived parents; who no sooner fasten their eyes on these dear creatures, but they shed, even for joy, the few tears they had left; gladly catching them into their arms, as being *all* they could now call their own.

But, alas! *that joy*, like every thing else, in this vain life, was soon swallowed up in fresh sorrows. Though when they looked upon their rescued children, it pleased them much, that none of them were *lost;* yet to think they had lost the labours of many years, and *that* by which, they hoped to have made comfortable provision for them, this sunk their spirits again, and became a new source of grief. And yet more grief behind!—Their children cry for *bread*, to satisfy their *hunger*, and for *drink* to quench their *thirst*. As for bread, their parents, alas! had *none;* and could not for their *drink*, easily procure them as much as *water*. They cried for Houses also, to lodge in, and for Beds to lie on; but very few could help them to either. Happy they, who in such deep distress as this, could take comfort in our Saviour's words, "*let not your hearts be troubled; in my Father's house are many Mansions.*"

The dismal *night* comes on; when many who were never inured to hardship, were obliged to lie, some in *barns* and *outhouses;* others

under the *arches* of a large *bridge* ; and more under *hedges*, and in the open *air*.

The *Church* held out against the fury of the flames, a long time, not having any house joining to it. At length the Steeple took fire, and that more than once ; but by the great care and diligence of some persons, it was quenched again. However about *Twelve* o'Clock at *night*, the Fire was seen afresh, in the middle of the *roof*. This also might have been stopped at first, had they had Engines, or could they have got ladders, and vessels to carry water : but these were all burnt. It was towards *Two* o'Clock in the morning, before it broke through the Roof into a flame. Then the Fire roared dreadfully, the *lead melted*, the *stones split and flew ;* nay, so fervent and irresistible was the heat, that the *bells* themselves *dissolved*, and *ran down in streams*.

It was a mercy, however, that this spacious pile of building was burnt no sooner ; for several who had carried their goods into it, and betook themselves for *shelter* within its walls, were not able for some time, without great hazard of their lives, either to retreat from, or to bear the *scorching heat*, from the houses that were burning around it : whilst others, were glad to lie down behind the tomb-stones, which were a shadow to them, from the fervent heat on one side, as the Church itself was, on the other, until the Fire about it was so far abated, as to give them an opportunity to save themselves, and to carry off the effects they had with them.

In other calamities, the description commonly exceeds the *truth ;* but our's was such, that it *surpassed* all the representations that have ever been made of it.

A Town, which the other day was so agreeable to its Inhabitants, and to Strangers, that passed through it, cannot now be looked upon without horror, nor be passed through without danger. Now the feet that walk therein, are even *scorched* with burning heat ; and persons are obliged to look narrowly about them, as they hasten along, lest *bowing walls*, and *tottering chimneys*, (which appeared at a distance

like craggy rocks) should, being deprived of their usual supports, fall upon them, and encrease the mournful number of those that were already dead A continual Fire and smoke, for some days (fed by the remains of ruined nouses, and the stores of wood and coal the Inhabitants had laid up for their winter fuel) were vomited out, as from so many subterraneous volcanoes: so that it might be truly said of this place; "*The Lord poured out his fierce anger, and kindled a Fire therein, and it hath devoured the foundations thereof.*" But to return;—

All the following night, while the Fire was slowly abating, some were employed in keeping watch over the few houses that were spared; others, in searching after their lost relations and children. Some of their friends they found dead in the Streets, part of them consumed with the flames, while the melancholy remains of them, were burnt black as an hearth, and even roasted in the Fire. These remains of human bodies, which they now found, together with others, which after some days were dug out from under the ruins of houses, some in one place, some in another, that by circumstances they guessed to be the relics of their dead relations, they carried to their usual place of burial, for their more decent interment.

The number of those that *perished*, has been generally reckoned to be *sixteen;* but upon the best enquiry I could make, I cannot find more than *fourteen*, inclusive of *one* that was burnt to death in the Hamlet before mentioned; not one Child (as has been already observed) but most of them *aged persons*, viz. *four men*, and *ten women*. One of those burned to death, was seen at a distance, endeavouring to make her escape. She soon dropt down, her cloathes being on fire about her. The person who saw her, could not with safety, attempt her preservation, she being encompassed with flames. Another, in like danger, was seasonably rescued by her Son, who went with a friend of his, to seek after her. They espied her at some distance in the Street, surrounded with smoke and fire. At first, they were afraid to come near, thinking it impracticable to save her and themselves too: however, her Son at last, ventured, took her by the arm, and they brought her off, the least dangerous way they could

see, through a Gate-house, that soon after fell down. All three were mercifully preserved.—Another, who had but little hopes of saving himself, as he was hurrying along, an aged woman earnestly craved his help. He desired her to hold fast, by the skirt of his coat ; which she did, till he had helped her on so far, that he presumed she had been safe : but being in so much danger himself, he had neither time nor power to be any longer thoughtful about her ; for he had gone but a little farther, ere the heat was so strong it took away his breath. He dropt down, and was unable to rise again ; but was taken up by one that opportunely came by, and his life was saved ; while the poor woman, (to whom he had afforded all the good offices he was able, in his then dangerous circumstances) was burnt in the Street.—Another man, apprehending that his *wife* and his *child* (though safe elsewhere) had been left in his house, when it was in flames, (tortured, no doubt, with different passions, *love* to his wife and child, *fear* of losing his own life, with *hopes* that by a bold attempt, all might be preserved) ventured in, and (after he had found his mistake) with great hazard made his escape out again, being almost scorched to death.—A Gentleman of the Town, returning from the place where the Fire first began, to his own house, was unexpectedly surrounded with flames. After he had passed the fire at one place, he came to another that was impassable ; so that he was obliged to make his retreat with the utmost danger of his life, being miserably burnt.—Soon after this, he made the best of his way over the River, into the Parish of St. Mary Blandford, to a friend's house there, and having anointed his hands and his face with some oil, he laid himself down upon the bed : but alas ! in a very short time, that place was in flames also, and he was forced to seek for refuge elsewhere. Restless world indeed ! *Happy they, who have a rest remaining for them, in a better.*

Many others were in the greatest danger, running for their *lives*, through the Streets, scarcely able to keep themselves on their legs, holding handkerchiefs up to their faces, to keep their breath, and to defend them from the scorching heat, while others *leaped out of windows* to save themselves, no other way being left, for their deli-

verance. What multitudes must have perished, had the calamity happened in the *night!* Good God, we bless thee, that "*in the midst of judgement, thou didst remember mercy.*"

One of the *Surgeons* of this place, returning out of the country, whilst the Town was on fire, ventured into the heart of it, in quest of his aged Mother, (his house being situated there) and was so scorched with the flames, that for some time he needed the assistance he would gladly have afforded: while another Gentleman of the same profession, had his *person* and his *house*, both kindly and providentially *preserved*; many needing his help, and his medicines too, to mitigate their torturing pains. He had upwards of *fifty* under his care at once, who all recovered, though some of them were burnt to that degree, and their pains were so exquisite, that they could have wished themselves out of this afflicting world.—What *scenes of sorrow* were opened, in *a few hours!* How many *weeping eyes*, and *bleeding hearts!* We have often read, "*That man is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward;*" but never experienced this Truth, so sensibly as now, Shall we any more "*say in our prosperity, we shall never be moved?*"

The *Small pox* at this time prevailed in the Town: this rendered the other calamity doubly afflictive, to the houses in which it was. About *sixty families*, by computation, were then visited with that distemper: not one indeed, of the sick, perished in the flames; but then they were many of them exposed to the greatest hazards other ways: some little ones, in this hurrying time, were snatched out of their *beds*, and carried away without almost any thing about them, so that their tender Mothers were forced to strip themselves of their *needful garments*, to cover them: and in this diseased and exposed condition, some persons were laid in the open *fields*, some under *hedges*, and the *arches* of the *bridge*, intermixed with those, that but a little before, fled *from* the infection. Some who were down of the distemper, and left in their beds (in this time of general confusion) by those that attended them, were soon *roused* with the dreadful cry of *Fire!* and its roaring flames; who in the fright, tore open their *eyes*, to see their danger, and make their escape, and wrapping up

themselves in their bed clothes, made the best speed their weak state would admit of, into the Gardens for security : and yet, though they had for some time, *no shelter*, but what the hedges or trees afforded them, they recovered.

Others, when the Fire drew near their dwellings, carried off their sick children and friends, to distant Houses, for greater safety : but no sooner had they quieted themselves a little, with this imaginary escape, and with the hopes of gaining by this means, a little time, to save part of their goods, but they were again alarmed with the sad tidings, that the Fire had seized *those* houses also : and now, they are brought to yield, to what they could not at first think of, without horror, viz. to carry their sick into the open fields, and were thankful, they could thus save them, from the devouring flames. It is well, considering what a world we live in, that *human nature* is so framed, that oftentimes, some *greater* troubles, seem to swallow up, or reconcile us unto *lesser* ones. That which once was the object of our dread, may, upon the comparison, become desirable, and matter of choice.

The Physicians in the mean time, took the best care of them they were able ; and through the timely and benevolent provision of some Apothecaries, in this Town, who sent immediately to Salisbury, and elsewhere, for such medicines as were most needed, they were soon tolerably supplied ; and within a day or two after the Fire, two or three neighbouring Gentlemen, looked in upon us, and left Forty Guineas, for the relief of these and other sufferers. Such kind and early acts of compassion, deserve our most grateful remembrance.

Yet upon the whole, our condition was melancholy beyond expression ; our calamities were great and numberless ; those that appeared before, in change of raiment, now were glad even of necessary garments ; and those that lived delicately, and fared sumptuously every day, were now thankful for a *morsel of bread*. As the Rev. Mr. Pitt, in a Poem, lately published, on this melancholy subject, represents our case ;

> " *The scarlet rob'd, who late on dainties fed,*
> " *With their own Slaves, partake the gift of bread.*"

The morning after the Fire, there was a great scarcity of provision. However some supplies were immediately thought of, and found. There were two ovens full of loaves, which were set in, a little before the Fire began; these, though baked to a crust (for the houses were both burnt, to which the ovens belonged) were very acceptable. But before night, we had fresh supplies sent in, from the neighbouring Parishes. The Sabbath day after the Fire, and for some days following, Waggon loads of Bread and Beer, with some Flesh, were kindly and liberally sent us, from Shaftesbury, Poole, Wimbourne, Bere, Wareham, Dorchester, &c. Among many others, a neighbouring Gentleman, was so generous, as to send in considerable quantities of Wheat, and fat Oxen. We were by this time, so very desirous of Flesh, we had scarce patience to stay till it was distributed to us.

Liberal Collections were soon made, in several of the adjacent Towns, and Sums of Money sent us, from private hands; part of which, was given away (to some more, to others less) to buy utensils and such things as were necessary for their several employments. Part also, of this early charity, was laid out upon Sheep and Swine; which were killed and distributed twice a week, in such portions, as were answerable to the number of the families that partook of them.

Care was also taken, to build Barracks, for the reception of such as lay exposed to the open air. The number of Barracks was upwards of Sixty. They were built with boards, and before the Winter drew on, they were covered with thatch. Those who dwelt in them, run up chimneys, and stopped the crevices, with moss and other things. Large sums were laid out in buying linen, rugs, and blankets, for such as were in great distress for want of them. Four Hundred Families were burnt out, and many of them reduced to great extremities, so that several Hundred Pounds of the public Charity, were expended, in their present maintenance, and to put them in a way towards their better subsisting themselves for the future.

The whole Loss given in upon Oath (for every one was sworn to to the Account that he brought in) over and above all Insurances, amounted to eighty four Thousand three Hundred and forty eight

Pounds. Now lest any should imagine that the distributions already made, are much greater than they really are, it may not be improper to take notice, that hitherto they have amounted to no more than six Shillings to the Pound. There remains one Dividend more to be made, arising from what was given to the Briefs, which will amount to no more than threepence, or fourpence in the Pound; however at most, it will not come up to sixpence in the Pound.

As several Persons never received any part of the public Charities at all, so others who received their share of the first dividend (which was only two Shillings to the Pound) were afterwards excluded, by an Order made at a Meeting of some of the Trustees, from having any further Share. But notwithstanding the distributions have amounted to no more, by reason of the greatness of our loss, yet great, surprisingly great, was the bounty of our fellow Christians. A most remarkable spirit of charity has been discovered in the British Nation, upon this, and such like occasions. Where liberty prevails most, the Inhabitants of such Countries, as they are most capable of, so we find they are most inclined to acts of generous benevolence.

Our calamities soon reached the ears, and touched the hearts of persons of all ranks and orders among us, with the utmost compassion; both which, I cannot sum up, in terms more pertinent and pathetic, than in those of the Reverend Mr. Harris, of Gravesend, on the like mournful occasion. "When we call to mind the calamity 'that [lately] befel us; when we consider how unexpectedly it arose; 'how fast it gathered strength, with what progress it advanced, and 'what desolation it carried along with it; how in a few hours space, it 'destroyed our wealth and possessions, and the means and effects of 'our industry: When we remember the sudden alteration that [a few 'hours] made in the condition and fortunes of our neighbours and 'friends, driving out many of them naked and destitute, depriving 'them in an instant of their habitations and employments, and leaving 'them utterly at a loss to provide for their daily necessity, or where 'to lay their heads. More especially when we consider the desolation 'and destruction that at the same time, and by the same means, befel

'the places of our religious assemblies; that at that very juncture, 'when we stood most in need of assembling ourselves together, and 'of confessing and bewailing our iniquities, and of vowing a better 'obedience for the time to come, and of hearing God speak by his 'Ministers, that at that very juncture, I say, we were deprived of 'these external means both of repentance and consolation. When we 'remember and consider these things, how justly may we apply to 'ourselves, the words of the Psalmist, In chastening the Lord hath 'hath chastened me; or, the Lord hath chastened me sore."

'But then the Words that follow, are no less applicable to our 'state and condition than the former; and we can with equal justice 'and propriety say, 'But he hath not given me over unto death.' We 'can truly say, 'that he hath not dealt with us after our sins, nor 'rewarded us according to our iniquities;' that he hath corrected us, 'but not in his anger,' since in the midst of judgement he remembered 'mercy. Though the flames were fierce and dreadful, yet he did not 'overthrow us, as he did the Cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, nor 'make us a standing memorial of his wrath, to all succeeding ages; 'but as a most tender and compassionate Father, he had mercy on us; 'and as soon as he saw our adversity, he was moved to pity and com-'miserate our distress. Many were the hearts and hands that he then 'opened; many and gracious were the refreshing showers, that he 'then poured down upon our heads; and by the speedy and liberal 'Contributions that were then raised, were the immediate and urgent 'necessities of many poor sufferers supplied, and they in a measure 'preserved from hunger, cold, and nakedness; evils, which after so 'deplorable a calamity, seemed almost unavoidable. Persons of the 'highest rank, and in the most eminent stations, did not think it beneath 'their dignity to take pity on us, to bestow to the relief of our neces-'sities, out of their abundance; and by their example, authority, 'and interest, to excite and promote the like generous disposition in 'others. And what greater comfort and consolation under so sore a 'calamity, could we wish for or desire, than to have our present most 'gracious Sovereign,* his illustrious Consort, and his Highness the 'Prince of Wales, touched with a lively sense of our misfortunes, and

* His Majesty Geo. II.

'miseries, and their hearts overflowing in streams of pity and com-
'passion, of bounty and liberality towards us; thereby satisfying the
'empty soul, and filling the hungry soul with goodness; and in their
'persons, verifying what the Prophet Isaiah had long before uttered,
'concerning the Church in its most flourishing estate, 'Kings shall
'be thy nursing fathers, and Queens thy nursing mothers."

FINIS.

OAKLEY, PRINTER.

Keynes, Richard

The aged Pastor a biographical sketch of the Rvd. H. Field, late minister of the congregational church Blandford, with his funeral sermon and appendix, containing the Rv. M. Blake's account of the fire, by which the town of Blandford, was burnt ... 1731

Blandford 1821